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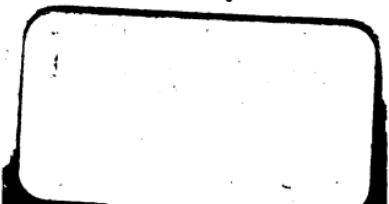
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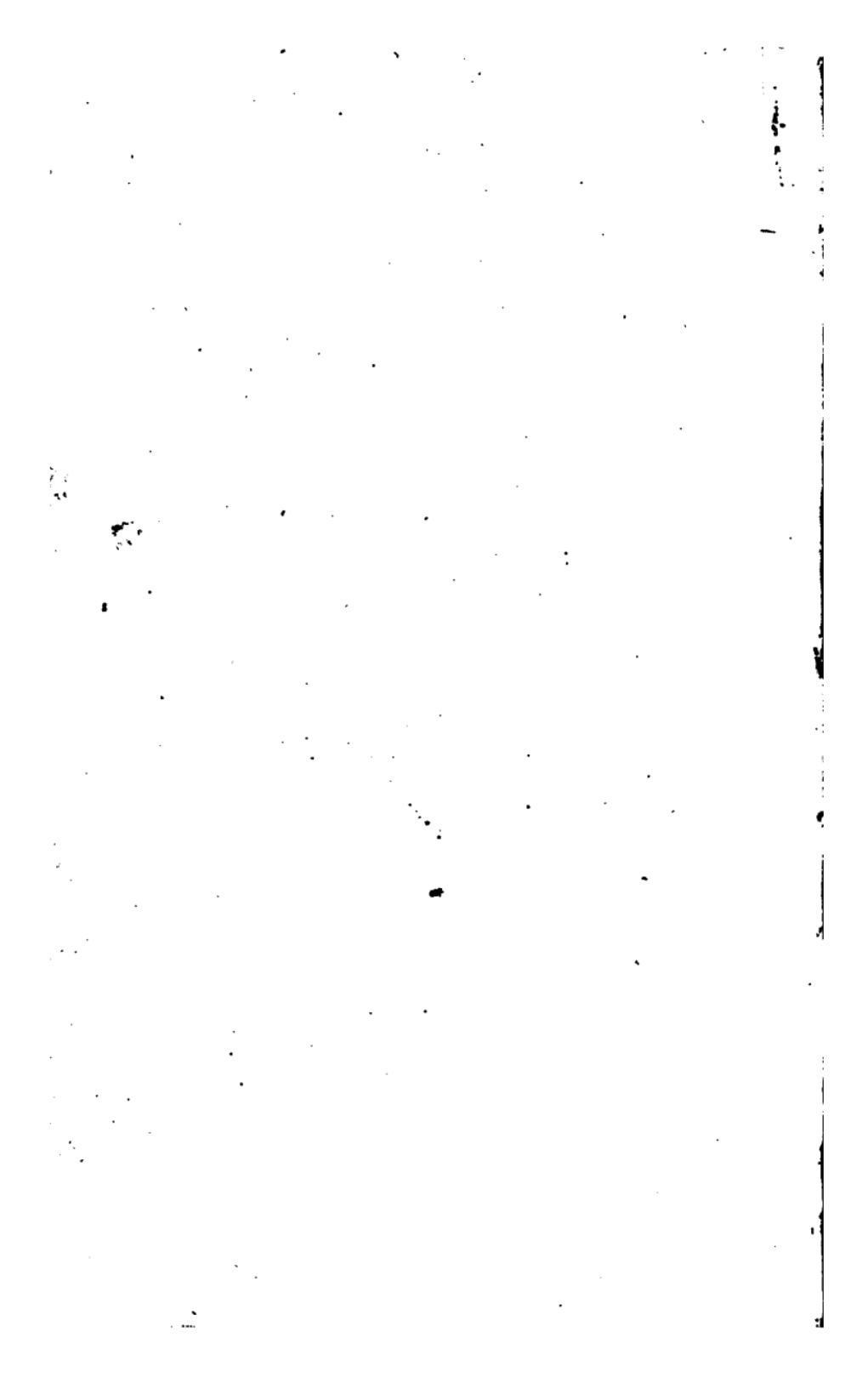
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All the Paths of the Lord are Mercy and Truth, unto such as keep his  
Covenant, and his Testimonies, PSALM XXV. 10.

Mala pena<sup>lia</sup> non sunt verè mala, quia fluunt à summo bono, nimurum  
Deo; ducunt ad summum bonum, nimurum fruitionem Dei; et  
erant in summo bono, nimurum Christo. BIEL.

The Evils of Punishment are not truly Evils, for they flow from the  
chief Good, even God; they lead to the chief Good, the Enjoyment  
of God; and were found in the chief Good, even Christ.

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## E R R A T A.

Page 5. l. 1. for *amaret sapare* read *amare & sapere*. p. 15. l. 15. for *sturbornnes* read *stubbornness*. p. 17. l. 25. *dele borb.* p. 21. l. 1. add *of* after the word *reproach*. p. 29. l. 31. after the word *as* add *in*. p. 33. l. 3. for *dominions* read *dominions*. Ditto, l. 18. after *counts* add *u bis*. p. 34. l. 6---7. for *Job vi. 36.* read *John iv. 34.* Ditto, l. 11. for *worked* read *worketh*. p. 36. l. 20. for *do* read *dorb.* Ditto, l. 23. ditto. p. 38. l. 19. for *Jeptha* read *Jephtha*. Ditto, l. 26. for *inordinances* read *inordinaces*. p. 39. l. 3. from the bottom, for *with* read *without*. p. 40. l. 16. for *sovereignty* read *sovereignty*. Ditto, l. 27. ditto, and 44. l. 2. ditto. p. 50. l. 29. for *bappenerb* read *happened*. p. 52. l. 9. for *faibness* read *faithfulness*. p. 54. l. 6. for *up* read *upon*. p. 67. l. 9. for *do* read *dorb.* p. 92. l. 18. *dele of.* p. 96. l. 6. after the word *God* add *are.* p. 112. l. 32. after the word *devil* add a comma. p. 115. l. 27. for *wildernensi* read *wilderness*.

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[ iii ]



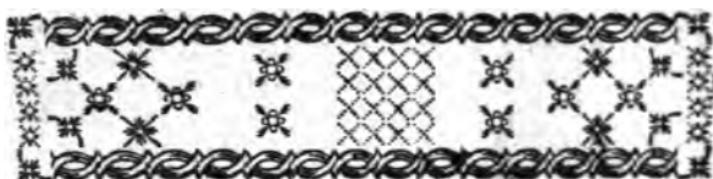
T H E  
E D I T O R.  
TO THE  
R E A D E R.

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23

OME Memoirs of the Life  
 of this excellent Man may  
be seen in Dr. CALAMY's  
Abridgement of Mr. BAXTER's Life  
and Times, page 426—436, and in the  
Continuation, 592—593, an Extract  
of which is prefixed to a late Edition  
of our Author's IMMANUEL, a Book  
well known and approved by many  
serious Christians.

The

The following Discourses were first preached by Mr. SHAW in his own Family, while visited with the Plague; and afterwards published to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of others. As they need no Recommendation, the Editor of this new Edition thinks himself under no Necessity to apologize for presenting it to the Public, especially as the Book was exceeding scarce, and greatly desired by many pious People, both of the established Church and Protestant Dissenters; with whom it will undoubtedly have a kind Reception.



## To the R E A D E R.

*Christian Readers,*

**I**T is now more than feven months, since it pleased the holy and wise God, together with some dear and christian friends from London, to visit my house with the plague; whereby he gently touched and gave warning to myself and whole family, confisiting then of eight souls, but called away hence only three members of it, viz. two tender babes, and one servant; besides my beloved sister, and a child of my precious friend, that man of God, Mr. G. C. since also translated, who were of those citizens that visited me; you will easily believe that I can have no pleasure to rake into the ashes of the dead, nor to revive the taste of that wormwood and gall, which was given me to drink; and yet I see no reason, but that I ought to take pleasure in the pure and holy will of God, which always proceeds by the eternal rules of Almighty love and goodness; though the same be executed upon my dearest creature-comforts, and grate never so much upon my sweetest earthly-interest; yea, and I see all reason in the world why I should give God the glory of his attributes and works before

all the world, and endeavour that some instruction may accompany that astonishment, which from me and my house hath gone out and spread itself far and near. I will not undertake to make any physical observations upon this unaccountable disease, nor to vindicate myself either fram that great guilt that is charged upon me, as if I were a finner above all that dwell in this country; or from those many false and senseless aspersions, that have been cast upon my behaviour, during this visitation, much like that we read of, Mat. xxviii. 13. but do freely commit myself to him that judgeth righteously, and pray with the psalmist, Psal. lxix. 6. Let not them that wait on thee O Lord God of Hosts be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. Neither do I purposely undertake in this preface to reconcile the providences of the most wise God to his promises, or to solve that seeming difference between the words of his mouth, and the language of his hands; between which I have only suspected some kind of jar, but have experienced an excellent harmony. *In very faithfulness hast thou afflicted me.* Whence arise all those uncharitable censures, with which the afflicted soul is apt to charge both himself and his God too? Spring they not certainly from these two grand canies, viz. a misapprehension of the nature of God, and of the nature of good and evil? Let the studious and pious reader search and judge. If ever therefore you would be established in your minds in a day of affliction; (1) labour to be rightly informed concerning the nature of God. Away with those low and gross apprehensions of God, whereby your carnal fancies do ascribe unto God such a kind of indulgence towards his children as you bear towards yours; which indeed no way agrees to his nature. His good will towards his children is a solid, wise and holy disposition, infinitely unlike to our humane affections. *Soli Dei competit,*

*completit, Amare, Saper.* (2) Labour to be rightly informed concerning the nature of good and evil. Judge not the goodness or evillness of things by their agreeableness or disagreableness to your flesh, palate, or carnal interest; but by the relation that they have to the supreme good. The greatest prosperity in the world is no further good, than as it tends to make us partakers of God; and the greatest affliction may thus be really good also. But that by the by. My design is to justify and glorify infinite wisdom, righteousness, goodness and holiness before all men. Oh blessed God! who maketh a seeming dungeon, to be indeed a wine-cellier; who bringeth his poor people into a wilderness, on set purpose, there to speak comfortably to them! Be of good cheer, O my soul! he hath taken away nothing but what he gave; and, in lieu of it, hath given thee that which shall never be taken away; the first fruits of life, instead of those whom the first born of death hath devoured; but, why do I say devoured? Doth not that truly live at this day, which was truly lovely in those darlings? Didst thou, O my fond heart, love beauty, sweetnes, ingenuity incarnate? And canst thou not love it still in the fountain, and enjoy it in a more immediate and compendious way? Thy body indeed cannot taste sweetnes in the abstract, or see beauty except it be subjected in matter: but canst not thou, O my soul, taste the uncreated goodness and sweetnes, except it be embodied, and have some material thing to commend it to thy palate? Be ashamed that thou being a spirit as to thy constitution, art no more spiritual in thy affections and operations: dost thou with sadness reflect upon those sweet smiles, and that broken rhetorick with which those babes were wont to entertain thee? (1) Consider duly what of real contentment thou hast lost in losing those. For what were those things to thy real happiness? Thou hast lost nothing, but what it was no solid pleasure, nor true felicity

licity to enjoy; nothing but what the most sensual and brutish souls do enjoy as much as thou. (2) Be ashamed rather that thou didst enjoy them in such a gross and unspiritual manner: art thou troubled because any earthly interest is violated? Rather be ashamed that thou hadst and cherished any such interest.

But pardon me, courteous readers, this digressive soliloquy; and now suffer me patiently, whilst I speak something by way of admiration, something by way of observation, and something by way of exhortation.

1. Let me call upon men and angels to help me in celebrating the infinite and almighty grace and goodness of the eternal and blessed God.

Who enabled me to "*abide the day of his coming,*" to stand when he appeared; and made me willing to suffer him to sit as a refiner of silver in my house.

Who carried me above all murmurings against I had almost said, all remembrance of those instruments that conveyed the infection to me.

Who reconciled my heart to this disease, so that it seemed no more grievous, noisome, or scandalous than any other.

Who subdued me to, I had almost said, brought me in love with this passage of the divine will! I can remember, (alas, that I can say little more, but that I do remember,) how my soul was overpowered, yea and almost ravished with the goodness, holiness, and perfection of the will of God: and verily judged it my happiness and perfection, as well as my duty, to comply cheerfully with it, and be moulded into it.

Who gave me a most powerful and quick sense of the plague of a carnal heart, self-will, and inordinate creature-loves, convincing me that those were infinitely worse than the plague in the flesh; so that I did more pity, than I could be pitied by my ordinary visitors.

Wh-

Who wonderfully preserved me from the ~~attack~~ of the Devil, never let him loose so much as to try his strength upon my integrity, to drive me to despondency, or to any uncharitable conclusions concerning my state.

Who enabled me to converse with his love and mercy in the midst of his chastening, to see his shining and smiling face through this dark cloud ; yea, kept up clear and steady persuasions in my soul, that I was beloved of him, though afflicted by him !

Who knew *my soul in adversity*, visited me when I was sick and in prison, refreshed, strengthened, comforted my inward man, in a marvellous manner and measure, and made me appear to myself, never less shut up, than when shut up ? Oh, would to God I might be never worse than when I was shut up of the plague ! the not removing of that affliction-frame, I shall count a greater blessing, and a more proper mercy, than the removing of that afflicted state.

Who cleared up my interest in his Son, strengthened my evidences of his love, satisfied and assured my soul of its happy state, more than at any time, more than at all times formerly ; I had clearer and surer evidences of divine grace in that patient, self-denying, self-submitting frame of spirit, than in all the duties that ever I performed. *The valley of tears*, brought me more sight of my God, more in sight into my self, than ever the *valley of visions*, all duties and ordinances had done. When the *Sun of righteousness* arose upon my soul, and chased away all the mists and foggs of self-will, and creature loves, then also did all black and dismal fears, all gloomy doubtings, most sensibly flee before him.

Who supplied my family from compassionate friends, with all things needful for food, physic, &c. The Lord return it seven fold into their bosoms.

Who maintained my health, in the midst of sickness, in the midst of so great a death ! I do not rem-

member that either sorrow of mind, or sickness of body, ever prevailed so much upon me, during three months seclusion, as to hinder me of my ordinary study, repast, devotions, or my necessary attendants, upon my several infected rooms, and administering to the necessities of my sick. These ensuing discourses were then composed ; which doth at least argue, that, through grace, this mind was not altogether discomposed, nor body neither.

Who preserved me, and gave me not up to death ? for I judge that I was personally visited with the plague, though not with the sickness.

Who hath given me a sincere and settled resolution, and vehement desire to live entirely on and to himself ; which I account to be the only life of a soul, and only worthy to be called a living. Grant me this prayer, O most blessed and gracious God, for the sake of my only and dear redeemer.

Thou O Lord God, who art witness, to all my thoughts and words, and works, knowest that in truth and soberness, I publish these things to the world, not to advance the reputation of my own silly name, or to be admired of my fellow creatures, but for the glory of thy holy name, to beget a good liking of so gracious a creator in all thy poor creatures, who are prejudiced against thee and thy holy service ; and to strengthen the hearts of thy servants, to a most firm and lasting adherence to thee, even in the greatest extremities ; that thou mayest be admired in thy saints, and glorified for giving such power, and grace, and comfort unto men. And, *ob that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and his wonderful works in and to the children of men.*

2. Suffer me to make a short observation of some few memorable passages out of many ; possibly they may be for the future, though they should not be for your present advantage ; the Lord direct you to make

a right

a right application of them, according to the emergencies of life.

First, I do thankfully record the gracious design of the holy and wise God, in that he had secretly prepared my heart, though at that time, I knew not particularly for what. I remember, that for some few weeks before, I had found a more than ordinary largeness and readiness of soul; particularly, that I had been studying the excellent mystery, and sucking out the strengthening marrow of that famous text, 1. John iv. 8. God is love; from whence, I had importunately prest upon myself the reasonableness of complying sweetly, cheerfully, universally with the will of God; little dreaming then of the plague, which was almost an hundred miles off me. Oh blessed and merciful God, who of old, didst make Abraham, and yet makest his and thy children to follow thee, though they know not well whither.

In the next place, I count it most worthy of my observation, (not unworthy of your consideration) that it pleased God to seize upon my family, in the beginaing of harvest; a harvest, which I had too earnestly expected, too carefully provided for, and promised myself too liberally from; which folly and vanity of mind, this visitation thus timed, did as clearly convince me of, methought, as if I had seen an hand writing upon the wall. I am ashamed, yet I will not stick to confess before all the world (God grant it may be for the seafonable and effectual warning of any) that my vainer mind was over pleasantly (not to say eagerly) drawn out towards secular and worldly (however necessary) employments and concernments: and thus I was rebuked.

Upon examination, I find, that verily, I have been guilty concerning my children. I do not remember, that ever any man reproved me for immoderate loving of them, or could for any indulgence that could be by human eyes discerned. But oh, I see

and feel it as a sword at my heart, that I loved them not so purely, spiritually, and properly in God, as I ought to have done. Philosophy will easily prove it to be a more tolerable vanity to doat upon a child, than upon a kingdom. But christian divinity doth abundantly demonstrate all creature-fondaefs, unreasonable and intollerable.

The next thing that I will record shall be, the difficult task that I found to maintain a right humble, and a right chearful frame at the same time: oh how oft and how long did I labour under this difficulty! that sense of sin which was called in to promote tenderness of heart, being over much indulged, was ready at length to destroy that largeness and chearfulness of soul which was so much my duty and interest to maintain: and on the other hand, the sense of divine wisdom, grace, and love in Christ Jesus being called in to keep up the soul from sinking, was ready to bear it up so high as that it almost forgot that it was in the waters. Beware, Christians, and watch diligently, that godly sorrow doth not settle into an ungodly dependency and inconsolable heaviness; the soul not being able to bear up under its own burden, and that a holy chearfulness and serenity do not evaporate into an unholy frothiness and forgetfulness of your infirmities, the soul not being able to manage its own metal and motions.

I know you would willingly understand something of the frame of my heart at that day, respective to my departure out of this world; you will best read my heart in the ensuing discourse, upon 2 Cor. v. 6. which I think was fetched from thence. I shall therefore say no more as to this matter; only acquaint you with one eminent experience relating hereunto: my mind, or fancy, or appetite, I know not well what to call it, was sometimes exciting in me some desires to live yet longer; I entered the lists with this temptation, and when I had fairly and calmly debated the ground

(157)



A

## Welcome to the P L A G U E.

A M O S iv. 12.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL.

**I**N this sermon of the prophet, the Lord reckons up the many fearful plagues wherewith from time to time he had essayed to reclaim this perverse people, the ten tribes of *Israel*, beginning at the sixth *verse*: But still concludes the relation, with a doleful *Epiphonema*, *yet have ye not returned unto me*. It is not my business to enquire into the several plagues, either the clear meaning of them, or the particular time when they took place or ended; nor into the impenitence and *stubbornness* of the people; though *Stubbornness* many

many useful things might be observed from hence. But in the conclusion, because none of the judgments had prevailed upon them, God resolves to trouble himself with them no longer, but to destroy them utterly. All that he had done to them in the land, had not prevailed; therefore now he will cast them and carry them out of the land, by the overflowing scourge of an *Affyrian* captivity: this threatening he denounces in the second and third verses, *I will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks, &c.* And after he had reckoned up the many calamities whereby he had sought to bring them to repentance, but they repented not, and so had demonstrated the equitableness of this final judgment, he re-assumes the same threatening, and perfisits in his former resolution, *verse 12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee;* and then adds, *because I will do thus unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.*

Which words may either be understood ironically, by way of derision of all their vain confidences and refuges; and then the *doctrine is, that there is no standing before, nor striving against, nor flying from God when he comes to execute vengeance;* which is an excellent truth, and of great use. Or else the words may be understood seriously by way of exhortation. The doubt seems to arise from the ambiguous meaning of the word [Meet] the word נַפְגֵּשׁ signifies both to meet in a *hostile* manner, to assault, invade or grapple with, as a man meets his enemy; so it is used concerning *David* addressing himself to fight with *Goliath*, *1. Sam. xvii. 48. He ran to meet the Philistine;* and also to meet in a *friendly*, amicable manner, by way of com-

muni-

munication, collocution, salutation or converse. So it is used concerning *Iсааc* going to meet *Rebeccah*, *Gen.* xxiv. 65. and concerning God's meeting of *Balaam* to speak with him, and impart his mind to him, *Numb.* xxiii. 3. 4. If we take the word in the first sense, then, it is spoken by way of irony or derision, and so the meaning of the words is contained in the proposition that I have laid down. If we take the words in the latter sense, then it is spoken seriously by way of exhortation, and so the meaning of them may be wrapt up in this

*Doct. That it is the duty of God's people to study a right behaviour towards him, and to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, in the time of their afflictions.* And in this sense I shall take them, and prosecute them. Besides that general, unalterable godly frame and behaviour which God's people owe to him as a standing duty and indispensable homage, there are some more especial behaviours and tempers which they owe to him in special cases, and are duties *pro hic & nunc*, as the season requireth. Particularly, there are some special behaviours required at our hands in the time of our affliction: and these last.

1. Towards our selves, as self-examination, self-judging, renewing of repentance, &c.
2. Towards men, meekness, compassion, instructing, warning, comforting, &c.
3. Towards God, as we shall see anon. An afflicted condition doth call for some more especial tempers and behaviours towards our selves and others: but these I am not to speak unto from this text. It is the soul's meeting God, behaviour towards

towards him, conversing with him, that my text leads me to treat of, and I shall not vary from it. In handling of which position, I shall take this method.

1. Premise some things needful to be known, concerning the souls conversing with God: for I shall retain the word [*conversing*] throughout my discourse, as being a single, and yet a large and significant word.

2. Shew what it is for a soul to converse with God; and how it comes to converse with him.

3. Prove the doctrine, that it is our duty to converse with God in the way of his judgments.

4. Shew particularly, how we are to converse with God in the time of afflictions.

#### 5. Apply it.

1. I shall premise some things needful to be known, that tend to clear up my way to the following discourse.

1. I premise, That *it is the great duty of men to converse with God*. I have read that it was a common precept that the Jewish doctors were wont to give to the people, that they should single out some one commandment, and exercise themselves very diligently in the observation of it, that therein they might make God their friend, and make him a kind of amends for the breach of many others. I doubt it is a rule that too many professors live by, who not having the genuine and generous spirit of true religion, do parcel out their obedience into some little shreds of homage and devotion; and instead of consecrating their whole lives to God, do content themselves with some circumstantial and light obedience, and think themselves

themselves people of great attainments, if they do but severely tie up themselves to hearing twice a week, and prayer twice a day, and a few other acts of more solemn worship. Certainly this is a penurious and needy spirit, much unlike the generous, ample and free-born spirit of true religion. The duty, the whole duty, the constant duty of man is to converse with God; commended in *Enoch* by the name of *walking with God*, Gen. v. 22. Where you may observe of him, that he did not only *set out* fairly with God, or *take a turn* or two with him, but he *walked with him* three hundred years together. The same God calls for from *Abraham*, under the same name. Gen. xxii. 1. Walk before me, and be perfect. But it is not only the command of God that makes this a duty: if there had been no express commandment concerning it, yet were it the duty of every man, necessarily flowing from his relation of a reasonable creature. As man is a creature, so he must needs *live upon God*; and as a reasonable creature, so he ought to *live with him and unto him*. Therefore hath God given unto man a noble rational soul, not only that he might talk and work, manage the creatures, and converse with the world; but that he might converse with the God of the world: that infinite, blessed and glorious being. This is the very end of man's creation, as man, as a reasonable creature; this was the end of his being created in the image of God; and when he was fallen from this image, this was the end of his redemption by Christ Jesus; that heaven and earth might be reconciled, and those that were far off might be brought nigh: sin is a sinking the soul down

down to self and the creature; and redemption from sin is nothing else but the recovery of the soul into a state of favour and fellowship with God. So that whatever is expressed by *Faith* and *Repentance*, is contained in this one word, *converse with God*. It is the great, the necessary, and as I may say, the natural duty of the reasonable soul.

2.. *It is the highest privilege of man.* The *privative* of man above the beasts in his *reason*; and the *glory* of reason is, that it is *capable* of knowing, loving, enjoying, and conversing with the supreme and infinite good. The privilege of reason is not, as too many think, that it is capable of understanding arts and sciences: that it is capable of climbing up into the nature and course of the heavens, and diving into the secret depths of the earth, and sea, and the creatures therein contained but in conversing with the infinite and glorious God. How miserable do vulgar souls abuse this nobly faculty, who exercise it only in discoursing, numbering, and ordering the poor concernments of the world and the body! yea, certainly those wise men, those *Scribes*, those *disputers of this world*, as the apostle calls them, who cry up this faculty, and glory so much in it, and yet do not exercise it about that high and eternal being, do not converse with God in pure affections, and God-like dispositions and conversations, but expend those vast treasures of reason upon secrets in nature, secrets in art, secrets in state, or any other created being, do enthrall their own souls, which they say are so free-born, and captivate and confine that noble principle, which they themselves do so much magnify; for sin is certainly the great and only

of

only shame and reproach an immortal soul : and indeed these men, though they put their souls to somewhat a more noble drudgery, yet are really no more happy than the vulgar sort, who spend the strength of their souls about eating and drinking, plowing, sowing, or keeping cattle. What difference, I pray you, in point of true happiness, is there between boys playing with pins and points, and old mens hugging bags and lands ? The noblest sciences, the greatest commands, the most enriching traffics are as very toys in comparison of true happiness, as the poor dunghil possessions of vulgar men : and the wise, the rich, the learned, the honourable of the world, that take up with employment in this world, and with a happiness in themselves, or in any creature, do as much disgrace their own souls, and as truly live below their own faculties, as he doth, that knows no higher good than food and raiment, no higher employment than to toil all his days in a ditch. For indeed, as to all things but conversing with God, man seems to be but equal, perhaps inferior to the beasts that perish. Doth man eat, drink, sleep, work ? So do they. Doth man find any sensual pleasure, which the beasts do not sensate as well as he ? Nay the gormandizing emperor envied the crane's long neck, and others have envied the more able and permanent lusts of the brute beasts, because themselves have been inferior to them therein ; and have enjoyed less sensual pleasure than they. If any glory in their knowledge of natural and political things ; I could instance in the strong memory, great sagacity, quick fancy, wonderful perceptions of many beasts, and their

their strange knowledge of many secrets which they never learned by books, no nor gathered gradually by observations. And as for man's communications of his notions by words and phrases, I doubt not to affirm, that there is some thing like to be found in beasts and birds, yea, that very beauty and flower of sound, even music, which some men magnify so much, is more fairly and sweetly uttered by the silly bird that sits solitary upon a bough, than by the choiristers of the pope's cathedral. What soiled prerogative worth naming remains to man above his fellow-creatures, but his conversing with God, which we call *religion*, and is indeed reason rectified, sanctified, exalted, and boiled up into its pure and primitive perfection! insomuch that I have sometimes thought, that I never heard a more reproachful word spoken concerning degenerate man, neither do I think that thing can be spoken of him more shameful and dishonourable, than what the apostle saith of the Heathen, *Ephes.* ii. 12. *without God in the world.* By conversing with God in the world, is man truly raised *above the beasts*, and *the godly man above all other men.* Nay, hereby is the godly soul advanced to the dignity and glory of the holy angels, or at least to a parity of happiness: for it is this that is their perfection and glory, as we find it described in *Matt.* xviii. 10. *They always behold the face of God.* And therefore our blessed Saviour doth affirm, that the saints in the resurrection, who shall be raised above all creature-communion, to live upon God wholly, singly, and entirely, shall be *equal to the angels of God*, *Luke xx. 36.* In a word, this is the most real

real heaven, setting aside all circumstances of place, &c. the perfect and proper happiness of a soul, *to see God, Mark v. 8. to be like unto him, 1 John iii. 2.* to converse with the father by the son, as our Saviour hath told us, who best knew it, *John xvii. 3. This is life eternal; to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* By this it is that God dwells in the soul, and the soul in God, as we shall see hereafter, and the kingdom of heaven doth really enter into every believer.

3. *The natural man is utterly unwilling and unable to converse with God.* An earthly mountain may as soon rise up to heaven by its power and good will, as an earthly mind: and such minds are natural and unregenerate. Sin, as I hinted before, is a falling from God, a sinking of the soul into self, whether *sensual* self, or *spiritual* self, and a shrivelling of it up into the creature, and the sinful soul is always, like a shadow, moving upon the surface of the earth, and higher it cannot get, *Rom. viii. 5.* Would you know what is the principal object of a natural man's admiration, inclination, and ambition? The psalmist will tell you, it is some created *good*, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* Will you know what is the disposition of the natural man towards the supreme and uncreated good; the apostle will tell you it is ignorance and enmity, *1 Cor. ii. Rom. viii. 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God.* This high duty of conversing with God in a right manner is besides the temper of the wicked man: never any such man did perform it. It is a contradiction: a wicked man conversing with God, is, as if one should say, an ungodly man,

man, that is godly: but that is not all, this duty is not only out of the hands of a wicked man, but out of his reach too: *Neither can he know him,* saith the apostle to the *Corinthians*, and again to the *Romans*: *Neither can he be subject to him. Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* Saith the prophet. Can man walk with God, converse with God, except he be reconciled to him? and what agreement, but by a mediator? What mediator between God and man but Christ Jesus, who is a mediator as the logicians call a *medium participationis*, who is God-man? In a word, some converse with one thing in the world, and some with another, as I noted before; but all converse principally and mainly with the creature, that are not regenerated by grace, reconciled by Christ.

4. *It is the duty of man in all ages of life, at all times, and in all places and conditions, to converse with God.* It is a necessary, natural, certain, constant duty, springing up out of the very nature and natural will of God, and out of the very nature and relation and capacity of the reasonable soul, binding *semper* and *ad semper*, as the school-men speak, and of admitting of no dispensation or diminution. There is no time wherein it is not a duty, or wherein it is less a duty than at another time: however, we are apt to give to ourselves many relaxations from it. The first fruits, nay, the very early buds of the tender soul, and of the springing faculties; these are due to God, and ought to be dedicated to him, *Eccles. xii. 1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* Manhood is not allowed so to attend unto cares and exploits, nor old age to pains and griefs, as to neglect converse with.

with God: but whether young men build or plant, fight or study, or work, or marry, or manage the affairs of the house or of the field, all should be undertaken and carried on in a way of converse and fellowship with God: or whether old men sit and muse, and meditate, or lie under the pains and grievances of decrepid age, still it ought to be in the Lord. Neither doth this duty admit of interruption, more than of cessation: there is no dispensation given us from this duty, as in no age, so in no hour of life. As we cannot live a moment *out of God*, so neither ought we to live a moment *without God* in the world. We ought continually to endeavour to walk in subservience to, and converse with God, yea, and as far as may be, in a feeling converse with him too. Holy *David* witnesseth of himself that the fear of God was continually before his eyes, and that he did continually converse with God; for so those words may be understood, *Psal lxxiii. 23. I am continually with thee.* The like is recorded of many other saints, both in the old and new testaments; concerning whom one may well say, as the queen of *Sheba* concerning the servants of *Solomon*, and with much better reason, *1 Kings x. 8. Happy are these thy servants, O Lord, which stand continually before thee!* Neither is it the duty of some few men, that have the greatest knowledge or the most leisure. For it springs up out of the relation of a creature, and out of the very nature of the rational soul; so that no soul of man is exempted from it, however many ignorant and profane persons live rather in a professed independence upon God. Neither is it a duty only upon supposition of leisure and freedom from

wordly business, as some other things are, but is equally incumbent upon prince and peasant, upon him that sits in his closet, and upon him that ploughs in the field ; yea they that go down unto the sea in ships, ought to go up unto heaven in their hearts ; and not only to converse with the clouds, which they often do, but above them too. A handful of earth, and a heart full of heaven may well stand together; for as this duty justles out no honest business, so neither should itself be justled out by any. And as this high and excellent duty agrees to all ages and times and persons, so it agrees to all conditions too: poor men think that rich men may well do it, and rich men think that poor men had need to do it: Prosperity thinks it had better things to mind than a God, and Adversity knows it hath worse things, but it must buy them: Plenty is too full to entertain them, and Poverty hath enough to do to bear up under its own burden: Learning knows how, but will not ; Ignorance says it would, but knows not how; but notwithstanding all this shuffling, the obligation to this duty ceases not: none so high as to be above it, none so mean as to be below it ; for rich and poor, high and low, learned and unlearned, prince and peasant, though they are divided amongst themselves by paucitilios and lesser differences, yet they are united in one universal being, meet in one and the same center, agree in the common capacity of reasonable creatures. As religion hath an interest and a concernment in the whole of the conversation, according to that of the apostle, *Phil. iii. 20, Our conversation is in heaven,* so also hath it a room in the conversation of

of every man in every capacity: no relation, condition, action, change is exempted from the powerful influence thereof; so the apostle describes himself, by his *living in all good conscience before God all along, Acts xxiii. 1.* and by his exercising himself in this thing, *to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, Acts xxiv. 16.*

Now the fifth step in order, would be, that it is more especially the duty of God's people to study to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, which is the doctrine it self, which I must not come to confirm, till I have shewed according to my promise in the second place, *what it is for the soul to converse with God, and how it comes to converse with him.*

Not to name those too low and improper notions that men ordinarily have of this high and spiritual matter, conversing with God, to speak properly of it, is a complex act of the soul, whereby it entertains God into itself, and renders itself back again to him; receives impressions from him, and gives up itself again to him; is first filled with him, and then empties itself into him. You may conceive of it after the similitude of a plant, that is influenced by the benign beams of the sun; and in those beams spreads itself, and in the virtue and power of them grows up towards heaven; or after the similitude of a river, that is continually filled with the ocean, and is continually emptying itself into the same. This seems to be our Saviour's elegant allusion, *John iv. 14.* where he compares a divine and godly principle in the soul, to a well of water springing out from God,

and continually boiling and bubbling up towards him, *springing up into eternal life.* Or you may conceive of it after the similitude of a glass, which receives the image of him that looks into it, and reflects the same image that it receives. For indeed the brightness and beauty of holiness wherewith a godly soul doth shine as a light in the world, is nothing but a reflexion of that light and brightness wherewith the Father of light shineth into it. And so the best of men have nothing of their own to glory in ; for they behold God, but it is in his own light ; they love him with a love which he hath shed abroad in their hearts ; they are therefore like him, because he hath stamped his own image upon them : and so they must needs acknowledge concerning all their acts of love and communion, and delight ; as *David* did in another case, *Of thine own we offer unto thee.* This is indeed the true and noble converse and communion with God, wherein the life of a godly man is infinitely advanced above the life of other men, and indeed doth nearly resemble the life of angels : their life is described in the holy scriptures, by *seeing God, a beholding him face to face;* which we must not understand of a naked idle speculation, but of a real assimulation arising from the divine impressions made upon them ; a beholding of him so as to be changed into his image. And such is a godly man's life, spiritual life, his life of converse with God, consisting in a participation of God, and of his grace, and a holy reciprocation or reflexion of affections to him ; which are indeed two distinct acts, though originally springing from the same fountain ; for the

the love wherewith the soul loves God, is itself an efflux from him ; for by loving us, he inspires a love into us; and by influences from God, we become God-like. But this converse with God is not only by the impressions of goodness from God, and the reflections of love and delight towards him ; but is also seen in the various impressions which God maketh upon the soul, and suitable to the various occasions of life ; so we converse with God by acts of fear, reverence, joy, confidence, self-resignation, and the like.

Now, because we are in the body, and so cannot converse with God so purely, spiritually and immediately, as the angels in heaven do, therefore it hath pleased God to appoint unto man ways and means of conversing with him, wherein he hath promised to communicate himself to the soul, and so to draw forth reciprocal acts of communion, acts of love, fear, reverence, confidence, resignation, dependence, and delight out of the same soul towards himself. Now these ways or means may be reduced to three heads: *duties, ordinances, and providences*; though indeed the two first might be contracted into one. First, I will speak a word or two of *ordinances*, such as the word and sacraments; for I shall name no more but these two. The preaching of the word is a way in which God doth usually meet the soul, to communicate *life*, 1 Pet. i. 23. *Light* Psal. xix. 8. *Warmth*, Luke xxiii. 32. *Growth*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. And the soul doth answer these impressions, *as the water face answereth face*, by the acts of *faith, love, joy, meekness, and holy resolution*. So also the administration of the sacraments is a way wherein

God meeteth the soul, and communicateth his *love, sweetness, fulness, goodness, strength, and vigour* to the soul; and it reflects upon him in the acts of holy *complacency and delight, chearfulness, thankfulness and dependence.*

Secondly, *duties*, these are also ways of converse with God; such as *confession, petition, thanksgiving, conference, singing, meditation, observation.* In all which God impresseth something of himself upon the soul, and draws answerable affections of the soul unto himself, as might appear in the particular explication of them; but that would be too much a digression. Only I will here note by the way, the mistake of many low spirited christians, who know no other converse with God, than the bare performance of these things; this they count the very top stone of a christian's perfections, the very flower of the spiritual life. But alas, this is a gross mistake! there is sure something more sweet, savoury, satisfactory in the spiritual life, than the dry duty: there is marrow in the bone, or else a holy soul could not covet it with so much fervour. Converse with God in duties, is a spiritual savoury, filling enjoyment, distinct from the duties themselves: this must needs be, except we will allow to wicked and hypocritical men the same dainties that the most sanctified souls do feed upon; and say, that the children's bread is common to the dogs, as well as them. The soul doth not converse with God in duties barely, when it prays, or meditates; for even godly souls themselves do many times find little converse with God in these, *viz.* when he suspends the influences of his graces, or their hearts are clogged

clogged or cloyed with earthly objects, or otherwise indisposed and shut up against him: it is not speaking to God that brings the soul really nigh unto him, nor bare thinking of God that advances the soul into the excellent state of feeling converse with him. Even prayer itself may prove many times an empty sound, *vox & præterea nihil*; and meditation, that most excellent and genuine offspring of the soul, may prove a poor dry and sapless speculation. It is not enough to set up the sails, but there must also be wind to fill them. But then doth the soul converse with God in duties, when the dark places thereof become filled with his divine light, and the empty places thereof filled with his divine love, and the low and languishing affections thereof are ravished and revived with the powerful insinuations of his almighty grace; when God draws, and the soul runs; he puts in his finger by the hole of the door, and the very bowels of the soul are moved for him, as it is described, *Cant. v. 4.* Then doth the soul converse with God in meditation and prayer, when the spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters, when he kisses it with the kisses of his mouth; and the shaking soul finds itself marvellously settled, the doubting soul established, the frozen heart thawed, the benumbed affections warmed, the scant and contracted capacity of it enlarged and wonderfully widened, and its slow and sluggish motions quickened into a lively and cheerful compliance with, and pursuit of the supreme and self-sufficient good: when the soul finds its legs to run after that glorious object which is presented to it, lifts up its hands to lay

lay hold upon the strength, the fulness, the faithfulness, the Christ of God ; and bearing up itself upon the wings of faith and love, flies out to seek its rest and happiness; and no longer envies the birds of the altar, for itself enters into the *holys of holies*, and through the arms of its mediator, throws itself into the very heart of God. In a word, and that shall be the word of God, then doth a soul converse with God in duties, when with *open face beholding the glory of God*, it doth not only admire it, but itself is *changed into the same image from glory to glory*, i. e. from grace to grace, 2 Cor. iii. 13.

Thirdly, *Providences*: these are another way wherein the soul converses with God. Now by providences, we mean in general, *the whole work of God in governing the world, and all things therein*. And so indeed a religious enlarged soul, a mind freed from particular pinching cares, low and selfish ends, converses with God in beholding and observing God's settled course of governing the world. The whole heavens, earth and sea, and the admirable order kept up in them, do teach the knowledge of God, and draw up the contemplative soul into an observation and admiration of him in them ; and the pious soul longs to find some impressions made upon itself by all these, and to be affected with God therein : It is not content with a bare speculation, but its meditation of God in these is *sweet* to it, as David's were, Psal. civ. 34. Particularly, God's *providence towards mankind*, as it doth most lively express his infinite love, justice and wisdom, so we ought to converse with him therein, and in all the changes of any kind

kind that befal man in the world, that befal all the kingdoms of the world, the four great monarchies of it, and all other subordinate dominions; more especially in all the mutations that befal the church of God in the world, and all men of all <sup>dominions</sup> fects and sorts therein, but most especially ourselves. Labour to converse with that infinite mind, wisdom and understanding that ordains and orders all the changes that befal yourselves. Now our conversing with God in the several changes that befal us in the world, is in general by endeavouring to serve the providence of God in every change. The promise of God *serves itself* even upon wicked men, and upon all creatures that do least understand it; but a godly man only knows how to *serve the providence of God* in the things that befal him: he hath no private, selfish interest of his own, but counts <sup>it</sup> *his* interest chearfully and faithfully to serve the will of God, to be what God would have him <sup>to</sup> be, to be without that which God would have him to want, and to do what God would have him do. Every wicked soul in the world sets up some trade for himself, and drives on some particular self-interest distinct from God: but a godly soul counts it his greatest honour and happiness to be nothing in himself, nor for himself, but is wholly at the beck of his creator; and looking upon all his interest as being bound up in God, is solicitous for nothing else but to serve the will of God in his generation: so the life of holy *David* is described, *Acts* xiii. 36. *David in his generation having served the will of God*, i. e. the providence of God, say the *Dutch annotations*, translating the words in this order. A good man eyeing nothing but the great

great and blessed God in the world, and knowing that he was not made for himself, but for a higher good, is only ambitious to be subservient to that infinite and sovereign being; herein imitating his blessed Saviour, who lived not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him, *John viii. 34.* and again, to seek the glory of him that sent him; *John vii. 18.* In a word, he looks upon himself, not as in himself, but in God, and labours to become wholly God's, and to live in the world only an instrument in the hands of him, that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. That in general, for the conversing with God in all kind of changes in general. Now these changes are reduced to two heads, prosperity and adversity. In the first of these, it is our duty to converse with God, and not with the creature-comforts, which we do enjoy from him, as one might shew at large. But I am to speak of the latter, and to shew how we ought to converse with God in that; but first, I must demonstrate, that it is our duty to do it; which was the third thing I promised, *vizi.* To shew, that it is the duty of God's people, to study to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, in a time of affliction. And here, I hope, I need not be at pains to prove by scripture, that besides the general busines of a Christian's life, some particular and more especial behaviours are required of him in an afflicted state, all will grant it sure: Besides, by that time I shall have declared what they are, I shall not need to prove that they are. Therefore for the present I shall content myself to give in three or four reasons of it, and so pass on. It is especially the duty of God's people to study to.

to converse with him aright in the time of afflictions.

1. Because *then especially it is hard to do it*: We are then very apt to be taken off from it, therefore we should then especially labour to pursue it, and perform it: we are then in eminent danger to be taken off from it; and that by these means.

1. *Our senses do set us on work to converse with outward means*, which, whilst we attend upon too eagerly we neglect and forget God. This might appear by an induction of particular afflictions; but that would be too long. I will only instance in one or two for explication. The sickness and painedness of the body, calls out the mind to seek after, and converse with physicians; bodily wants call us to seek after bodily supplies, and so all kind of distresses call out the soul to seek creature-relief. Call upon the sick and languishing patient to call upon, and hang upon divine help, to converse with God: alas, he hath enough to do to attend upon his pains and pangs; tell him of ease, of recovery and he can hearken to you, for that is the news that he longs to hear. Call upon the poor pined beggar to seek relief of God, to converse with him: alas, he finds such a faintness in his limbs, such a gnawing of hunger, such a restless appetite within himself, that he can groan out nothing, but, *Oh that one would give me bread to eat!* In a word, the soul is more naturally addicted to mind its body to which it is joined, than the God that joined it to that body. Hence you may observe two things by the way, viz.

The

1. The reason why so few persons repent in time of sickness; the sense of sickness drowns the sense of sin.

2. The reason why so few poor people who are evermore conflicting with the necessities of the body, do not at all mind the concerns of their souls: the exigencies and straits of the body, do cry louder in their hearts than all the words and works of God. So that as health is the best time for repentance, so it seemeth that the best way to teach the poor, is to relieve them.

*2. The corruptions of the heart are then the most apt to make war against heaven.* This is the opinion of him who knows the temper of man too well, Job i 11. *Put forth thine hand against him and he will curse thee to thy face.* And I am persuaded that the devil acts much by this observation; which makes him endeavour all he can to make many good men poor, thinking thereby to make them less good; though the wise and merciful God doth wonderfully prevent him. For indeed the soul is so naturally tender of the body, that it is loth God himself should touch it; if he do, it is ready to fret and storm, and fly in his face. Converse with God! saith the wicked king, *Why this evil is from the Lord; what should I wait upon the Lord any longer!* 2 King. vi. 33. There are many corruptions of the soul that are most ready to clamour against God in the time of affliction, as *fear, anger, unbelief, yea, and sinful self-love and creature-love*, an affection that can never be taught to converse with God, yet will go crying after him, when he takes away any darling from it, as Pabtiel went crying after his wife; or rather, crying against him,

as *Micah* cried against the men of *Dan*, saying,  
*Ye have taken away my Gods, and are gone away, and what have I more?* Judg. xviii. 24.

3. *Temptations do then come strongest from without.*  
 Then it is the devil's time to play his game: what, put up this reproach! what, will you sit down with this loss! up and revenge thyself. He that knows so well the temper of man's heart so ready to curse God when he touches him, Job ii. 5. will not fail to touch the heart, and tempt it to curse him indeed, Job ii. 9. *Curse God and die.*

The second reason why we ought especially to study to converse with God in the time of afflictions, is because that is a time wherein we are most apt to think ourselves excused from this duty, as if it were allowed us in our extremity to forget God, and mind ourselves only. And that not only in respect of those bodily straits and distresses, which I named under the last head, but in respect of our own passions. When the afflicting hand of God is upon us, pressing and grieving of us, and taking our beloved comforts from us, we are apt to indulge our own private and selfish passions, care, fear, sorrow, complainings, &c. Yea, to think we are in some sense allowed so to indulge them. How willingly do we suffer ourselves, to be drawn into a converse with ourselves, to be contracted as it were into ourselves, and suffer ourselves to be carried down the stream of our own passions, which at other times we should think it were our duty to resist! even as the heart in naturals draws home to it in a time of danger, the blood that was dispersed abroad in the body, as it were to defend itself: so the heart in morals gathers home its

powers and affections which were formerly bestowed here and there, to employ them all about itself in a time of sore affliction. And we are apt to think ourselves excusable too in so doing: so that if God himself should ask a distressed soul as he did *Jonah*, *Dost thou well to be careful, fearful, sorrowful, querulous*, because of these afflictions, losses, distresses that are upon thee? It would go nigh to give him the same answer, *I do well to be sorrowful; yea, and to refuse to be comforted.* There seems to be allowed us some natural affections in case of extream affliction; which, how far they are lawful, I will not now dispute. But sure I am, that if such be allowed us, they must not be wild extravagants, wandering without the bounds of religion, and conscience, as if God had laid the reins upon the neck of the soul, and given it leave to indulge itself in what passions it would for a certain time, as the daughter of *Jeptsha* was allowed to go whither she would, wailing upon the mountains for two months. We are never allowed any passions or affections sure, that do not comply with the will of God, and consist with our submission thereunto. But whatever they are, I find, that under pretence of those, some men are apt to be carried unto strange inordinancies, and commit many passionate outrages; and indeed the best of men are too prone to suspend and interrupt that lively and feeling converse with God, which they ought to maintain even when they smart most.

3. Because then is a time when there is more especial use fit, and need of such converse with God. And that,

1. *To give rest to the soul.* In prosperity men forget God, and yet make a shift to find some kind of rest in their pleasures, friends, employments, some take comfort in their cups and companions ; and indeed all are apt to fancy a contentment in creature-enjoyments. But in a time of great affliction, all these are gone, or at least have no favour in them ; and where shall the weary soul find rest then ? Then there's no shew of rest but in God alone. When all other props fail, then either catch hold of God or fall. There is now nothing left to give any settlement or contentment to the soul but God alone : and in him there is ease to the sick, rest to the weary, settlement to the shaking, contentment to the troubled Christian. Therefore converse with God in the day of greatest affliction : which is the same counsel in effect with that of our Saviour, Matt. xi. 28. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

2. There is need of it, *to give relief to the body also.*

And so conversing with God in a right manner, is the best policy ; the surest way to recovery, and relief. See what a speedy cure there is in it, Psal. xxxiv. 5, 6. *They looked unto him and were lightned, and their faces were not ashamed; this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* In vain is conversing with friends, physicians, counsellors : in vain is all creature-converse without this : no rest to the soul, no ease to the body in time of affliction, with converse with God : so that a man in affliction estranged from God, stragling off from God, is altogether

altogether miserable. In a word, separate a soul from God ; and in prosperity his enjoyments are low, and in adversity the want of them is very bitter : so that there is good reason why a Christian should study to converse with God in the way of his judgments. But the great art is to know how. This therefore I now come to in the

Fourth place, to shew particularly, *how we are to converse with God in afflictions.* Now there are two ways of explaining this.

1. By shewing with what attributes of God we are to converse.

2. By what acts of the soul. But I shall bring both these into one.

1. We ought to converse with the *absolute and unlimitted sovereignty* of God whereby he, as a free and supreme agent, doth what he will, and none can say unto him, *What dost thou?* Dan. iv. 35. This Job often eyes and owns: particularly, Job ix. 12. *He taketh away, none can binder him, and who can say unto him, What dost thou?* This we must also eye often, and own heartily. This we may well argue from God's creating of us: he that made us thus without any constraint, can he not, may he not make us otherwise, and alter us without restraint? So Job argues, chap. i. 21. We may also argue it from the subordinate sovereignty, and inferior supremacy of men; even a monarch among men doth whatsoever he pleaseth, and who may say unto him, *What dost thou?* Eccles. viii. 3, 4. Yea, a very Centurion hath a kind of sovereignty in this sphere, over as many as are under him, he saith unto one man, *Go, and be goeth;* and to another, *Do this, and be doth it,* Matt. viii. 9. And shall

shall we not then acknowledge a sovereign power, and independent absolute authority in the great and blessed God, over the whole creation, the workmanship of his own hands? So the good centurion argues, and infers, in the place last quoted. Nay, as the apostle saith in one place, *We have fathers of our own flesh* who use us at their pleasure, and we do not gainsay their authority, we do not say to our father, *What begettest thou?* Nor to our mother, *What hast thou brought forth?* Isa. xlv. 10. Nay if these similitudes will not teach you, I will say to you, as God to the prophet, *arise go down to the Potter's house*, there I will cause you to learn this lesson: he maketh or marreth his vessels of clay, as often as he pleaseth; and, are not ye in the hand of the Lord, as the clay is in the hand of the potter? Jer. xviii. 6. I speak the more to this, in as much as I find, that however men give God good words, and confess his dominion over them and theirs, yet when it comes to it, that he touches them in any of their darling comforts, they are ready to clamour against him in their hearts, as if he did them some wrong; if not to curse him to his face.. Certainly there is some atheistical opinion of propriety, that in some degree or other is apt to steal into the most devout minds: and sure I am, we do not only barely offend, but we do ourselves much hurt; we wound our own peace; we shake the settledness of our own hearts; we put ourselves into briars: in a word, we both lessen our creature-comforts, and multiply our griefs, and aggravate our sorrows, by calling things our own: if we had not taken them to be

our own, it would not have troubled us to part with them.

Be sure therefore to eye and own the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of God: but that is not all; it is not enough to believe it: we must converse with it otherwise than by thinking of it, or assenting to it. Then do we converse with the sovereignty of God.

1. *When the powerful sense of it doth silence quarrelling, yea murmurings, yea even disputings in the soul.* We may indeed modestly contend with men concerning their dealings with us; the *Potsherd* may strive with the *Potsherd of the earth*; but it must not say to the *potter*, why hast thou made me thus? A pacate and quiet frame of heart, is a real conversing with the sovereignty of God. So did *Aaron* when he held his peace, *Lev. x. 3-* and *Job*, when he attributed nothing unseemly to God, *Job 1. ult.*

2. *When the sense of it doth suppress self-will.* This is an unruly lust in the soul, a giant-like spirit warring against heaven, and breeding bate continually. This is that which maintains a *Meum* and *Tuum* even with God himself, that sets up interests, as the Jews set up princes, *Hosea viii. 4.* but not by God, yea indeed in opposition to him. This is the feditious party in the soul, that is always crying out, we will not have this man to rule over us: and when that darling interest which this proud rival hath set up, is touched of God, and smitten and blasted from heaven, it is ready to fret and storm, yea, and to think it hath reason to be angry. If this son of the bond-woman were cast out, *Abraham's family* would be all of

of a peice, all in order and at rest. If this undisciplin'd and perverse spirit were quite banished; Oh what a calm day would it be in the soul! what fair and sweet correspondence would there be between God and his creature! for certainly this is the *Jonah* that raises the storm, and makes the great deeps of the soul that they cannot rest, but do perpetually roll and toss, yea and cast out mire and dirt continually. But alas, I doubt this spirit is not quite laid, no not in the most spiritual man: the best of men are ready to nourish and hatch up some darling, some private interest or other of their own, distinct from God, and the grand interest of their souls; which God himself must not touch; some gourd or other that the cold wind must not blow upon. He is a blessed man indeed, who doth so understand that he lives and moves in God alone; and is so overpowered with the sense of the infinite goodness and holiness of God, and the absolute perfection of his divine will, as that he reckons it his greatest perfection to be nothing in himself, nor have nothing of his own distinct from God, but only studies to be great in God, to be filled with God, to live to him, and for him; to enjoy all things as in and under him; who counts it his *only interest* to quit all *self-interest*, and particular ends, and to be freely at the disposal of the highest mind, conformable to the highest good, cheerfully compliant with the uncreated will. *Potiphar* had so committed all to *Joseph*, in the sense of his great faithfulness, that he knew not ought he had, *save the bread that he did eat*, Gen. xxxix. 6, but this similitude is too low: a godly soul should commit all its interest, its life and livelihood,

lihood, and all to God in the sense of his sovereignty, and not know ought that he hath, nor not his own life, but despise it in comparison of uncreated life; as *Job* speaks, *Job ix. 21.* methinks the sovereignty of God speaks such language to the soul and in it, as *Eli to Samuel, my son, hide nothing from me, keep nothing back of all that thou hast,* and the pious soul should not, with foolish *Rachel,* conceal any selfish interest, so as not to be willing to part with it, when its sovereign Lord and father comes to search the tent; but, with allusion to *Amos vi. 10,* when God comes to ferret out all self-interest, and shall ask *Is there any such yet with thee?* Should be able to answer boldly, *No,* there is none. Blessed is the man that is in such a case; blessed is the man whose only interest is to serve the will of the Lord! well, improve the infinite sovereignty of God to this end, and work it upon and into your hearts, that all self-will may stoop to it: and let the main interest of your souls, be so planted and established in your souls, that no other interest may be able to grow by it: charm your own self-will with such severe reproofs, as this is; either *deny thyself,* O my soul, or *deny thyself to be a creature:* either be wholly at God's command, or call him not thy sovereign.

3. *When the sense of it doth beget reverence in the soul towards God.* We ought not only to be subject to the rod of God, but even to reverence him when he correcteth with it: and so only to accept of the rod, but to *kiss* it too. And surely if the fathers of our flesh corrects us; and we give them reverence, *Heb. xii. 9.* much more ought we to reverence

reverence the sovereign father both of flesh and spirit. This is a devout act of the soul, whereby it looks up and adores the infinite and sovereign majesty, and thinks equitable and honourable thoughts of him, even when he is in the way of his judgments. And these are the proper acts of a soul's conversing with God's sovereignty in the time of afflictions. When we are silent before him, subject unto him, and reverencing of him; then do we really and truly converse with him as our almighty and absolute sovereign. But God's authority and prerogative, though it may silence, will scarce satisfy: such a corrupt and rebellious pass are our natures grown to. Therefore,

2. Converse with the *perfect and infinite righteousness of God* in the time of all afflictions; that divine perfection whereby he renders to every man what is just and due, and no more. This we are to eye and own, and sincerely to acknowledge, even in the time of our greatest extremity, after the example of *Daniel*, chap. ix. 14. *The Lord our God is righteous in all his works: and of the godly Levites*, Neh. ix. 33. *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, thou hast done right.* Argue with *Abraham*, Gen. xviii. 25. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* Can righteousness itself err in judgment? Shall the timber say unto the rule, why hast thou measured me thus; or to the line, thou art crooked? *Are not my ways equal, saith the Lord?* Ezek. xviii. 25. are not the Lord's ways equal? Let your souls say too. Be ye firmly persuaded of the infinite and incorruptible righteousness and equity of God, but that's not all; we do not then converse with the righteousnesses of God, when we do

do believe it, or acknowledge it: a very *Pharaoh* may be brought to make such a confession, Exod. ix. 27. *the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* But then do we converse with the righteousness of God, in general, when the sense of it doth give a rational satisfaction to the soul. And indeed, whereas the sovereignty of God is enough to silence, yet his righteousness had need to be called in to administer satisfaction: the former is sufficient to stop the mouth; but there is need of the latter to settle the heart, and indeed methinks it is a heart-settling consideration. For, how can the interest of the creature be better secured than in the hands of a righteous God? Where can we venture all we have, better than in such a certain and steady bottom? How can we better trust ourselves, than on such firm and even ground? We will trust ourselves far with an upright and righteous man: and if we hear of the miscarriage of any interest of ours at any time, it doth mightily calm and satisfy our hearts, if we are assured that it was in the hands of a just and upright person: much more rational and steady satisfaction may the infinite righteousness of God administer even in the time of the greatest affliction, if it be duly wrought into the heart. But more particularly,

I. *The powerful sense of the righteousness of God should make us sensible and serious.* It becomes us seriously to ponder, duly to weigh, and in good earnest to lay to our hearts, all that is done to us by a righteous God. We use slightly to pass by, and slightly to esteem the words or actions of vain man: but it is not for nothing that the righteous God afflicts any man, in any measure, at any time.

time. The voice of God, though it be not always *articulate*, yet it is always *significant*. *Will a lion roar for nothing?* Surely every action of the righteous God hath a meaning in it. A hair falls not from our head, nor a sparrow to the ground without him : much less sure do greater changes befall us without him. And in all things he is infinitely righteous. Oh how doth this call upon us to sensibleness and seriousness ! how ought all the powers of the soul to be awakened to attention, when the righteous God utters his dreadful voice ! and the whole frame of the heart and life to be composed under his heavy hand ! now if ever, one would *say of laughter, it is mad*: one would reckon trifling to be a kind of prophaneness and judge that foolish jestings do almost border upon blasphemy, formerly not convenient, now not lawful. For indeed a vain, frothy, light, trifling spirit, in the day of affliction, is in a sense a blaspheming of the righteousness of God. As a consequent of this,

2. *It should put us upon self-examination.* Nature itself hath taught the Heathenish mariners to enquire where the fault was in a storm, *Jonah i. 7.* Much more may the knowledge of God's infinite righteousness teach us : so may the holy word too, that word in *Lam. iii. 40.* *Let us search and try our ways, &c.* And many others. Now do the faculties of the godly soul being awakened, begin to cast lots upon themselves, to find out the guilty party : and certainly God hath a great hand in ordering these lots ; he doth ordinarily *show unto man his sin*, even by the verdict of his own heart. Conscience, I mean, is God's vicegerent in the soul ;

soul ; and though it is true, this judge is oft-times corrupted and bribed, or at least over-ruled in prosperity ; yet God instru~~e~~theth it to speak good sense, and to speak out, and speak the truth in the time of affliction. I believe they hit the nail upon the head, who cried out one to the other, *Verily we are guilty concerning our brother*, Gen. ixii. 21. Another cries verily I am guilty concerning my master, concerning my people; guilty concerning my wife, concerning my children, concerning my estate, my time, my talents ; and it may be all true. I believe the Heathen was in the right, who looked upon his hands and feet, and cried out, *Judg. i. 7. As I have done, so God hath requited me* ; and the Babylonish monarch harped upon a right string after he was come to his right wits again. *Dan. iv. 37. Those that walk in pride, he is able to abase.* God hath not given to our faculties any infallibility indeed, but he enables them to make good guesses ; and I am verily persuaded, doth many times lay the hand upon the right sore, and order this secret lottery from heaven : so that, that faculty, or that frame, or that action which stands convicted in the court of conscience, is seldom held guiltless in the court of heaven.

3. *It should work us to humiliation and reformation ; an heart broken, and a conversation healed of his breaches.* By humiliation, I mean, a heart broken purely, properly, and spiritual for sin. I do not mean by it, an heart broken for losses and afflictions, and bowing down itself heavily under the burden of its own distresses ; no, nor an heart broken

broken for sin, as viewing it only in the calamitous effects, and bitter fruits of it? Which I doubt is the humiliation of most. Many may say concerning their humiliation, to use the prophet's words in a different sense, *Zach. xiii. 6.* *These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends,* by the loss of my friends, the loss of my health, the loss of my goods; these tears that you see, these groans that you hear, are nothing but the scar which the sore hath left behind it, and the wales which the rod hath made. I doubt our very sorrow for sin, in a time of affliction, admits of a mixture of carnal self and passion, and so of sin too. But I mean, a pure, spiritual, proper sorrow and hatred of sin; which I know may be broached by sharp afflictions, and have vent given to it by piercing the vessel; but that is not the proper cause and ground of it. *Moses* in his joy, had an eye to the *recompence of reward*, *Heb. xi. 26.* And so a christian in his sorrow may have respect to the *recompence of his sin*, I mean, his afflictions; but it is not primarily and principally caused by these; for though these dreadful showers from heaven should cease, yet the stream of his eyes, or at least the fountain of his heart would not cease issuing forth bitter waters. Though the righteousness of God serves to give vent to godly sorrow, yet it is the goodness and holiness of God that gives it. Do we sorrow for sin, because it spoiled us of our comforts, stripped us of our ornaments? Then sure we think there is something in the world worse than sin, for which we should bewail it, and hate it; and so consequently, that there is something better than

God, for which we should love him. Alas, how apt are we to run into a practical blasphemy before we be aware ! In a word then to decide this controversy, our afflictions, losses, distresses in the world, may possibly be as a *bucket* to draw up this water of godly sorrow : but they must not be the cistern to receive and hold it. Serious and spiritual humiliation is a real conversing with the righteousness of God. To meet God, indeed to fall down before him ; and to converse with him, is to lie down under him, the truth of which temper is best evidenced by that excellent commentator, *the life of a Christian*: this doth best declare the nature and interpret the meaning of heart humiliation. He that breaks off his sins doth best make it appear that his heart is broken for them. If you would know whether there have been rain in the night, look upon the ground and that will discover. Oh my friends, if the dust be laid ; if all earthly joys, contentments, pleasures, concernments, be laid, you may conclude your sorrow was a shower sent into your souls from heaven.

If you see a boy both sobbing and minding his book, you may conclude he hath some right sense of his master's severity. *Conversion to God*, is the most proper and real conversing with him in the way of his judgments : so he himself interprets in that complaint made, Isa. ix. 13. *The people turneth not to him that smiteth them, &c.* That which happeneth to Moses when he had been in the mount with God, *Exod. xxxiv. 29.* should also be the condition of every good *Israelite*, when he hath been with God in the valley, the *vale of tears*, and afflicted state : his face should shine, his conversation should witness that

that he hath been with God ; *the smell of this fire* should pass upon his garments, his whole outward-man. The spirit of mourning should be demonstrated by the spirit of burning. If God from heaven set fire on *the standing corn* of our *worldly comforts*, we must answer him from within, and set fire on the *stubble* of our *worldly lusts*, and corruptions. Let me change our Saviour's words therefore a little, *Matt.* vi. 18. and exhort you earnestly : thou christian, when thou fastest, when thou humblest thy soul for sin, *wash thy face also*, cleanse thy outward conversation from all sinful pollution, that thou mayest appear to be humbled indeed. And this shall be accounted as a true and real conversing with the righteousness of God in the time of affliction.

3. *Converse with the faithfulness of God.* This attribute of God hath respect to his promises ; and therefore it may be you will think strange that I should speak of this in a discourse of afflictions, as not having place there at all. Every one will readily acknowledge that God's sovereignty and righteousness do clearly appear in his judgments ; but how his faithfulness can be exercised therein, they see not. What, faithful in punishing, in plaguing, in visiting, in afflicting, distressing his creature, how can that be ? many will be ready to think rather, that God is not faithful at such a time, when he denies what he had promised to give, takes away what he had promised to continue ; when he plagues *David* every morning, when he had promised him that the *plague should not come nigh his dwelling place* ; when he brings *Abijah* to the grave, whom he had promised that

his days should be *long upon the land*; and *Job to* the dunghil, to whom all the promises were made both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Is this faithfulness? Doth God fulfil his promises by frustrating them? Notwithstanding all this, it seems that the faithfulness of God hath place in the afflictions of his people: for so faith *David* expressly, *Psal. cxix. 75.* *I know that in* *faithness thou hast afflicted me:* if indeed faithfulness be taken properly in that place: neither indeed need it seem so strange as some men make it: for God hath promised his covenant-people, to visit their iniquity with a rod, *Psal. lxxxix. 32.* *The* *rod of a man;* a fatherly chastisement, as it is explained, *2 Sam. vii. 14.* where this seems to be made a branch of the covenant, and is understood by many as a promise. But if that be not a plain promise, I am sure there is one in *Psal. lxxxiv. 11.* *No good thing will he withhold from them that walk* *uprightly:* and if no good thing, then no correction neither, for that is often good and profitable for the people of God in this world for many excellent ends; which, considering the nature of man, cannot well be accomplished without it; as might appear in many particulars; but it is not needful to run out into them. God will take more care of his own people, than of the rest of the world; and will rather correct them, than not reduce them. It is their main happiness that he takes care for, and he will in kindness take out of the way whatever hinders it, and give whatever may promote it. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts: he judges otherwise of health, riches, liberty, friends, &c. than we do. We are apt to measure

measure God by ourselves, and our own affections which is the ground of our mistake in this busines. We mind the things that please our flesh, our senses, our appetite, our fancy ; but God minds the things that concern our souls, and their true happiness. The saints are much dearer to God, and much more beloved of him, than they are to themselves ; and therefore he will not give them what is sweet, but what is meet ; he will give them what makes for their real and eternal happiness, whether they would have it or not. He loves them with a strong and powerful love, and will not deny them any thing that is truly good for them, though they *cry out under it* ; nor allow them any thing that is really hurtful, though they *cry after it*. So will a wise father upon earth do by his children, to the best of his skill and power ; much more will God then, *qui plusquam patrum amorem gerit in suos*, whose bowels are infinitely larger and stronger than those of a father. Now then, labour to converse with the faithfulness of God in the time of afflictions, which is by studying the covenant and the promises of it, and your present condition, and comparing them together, and observing how consonant and agreeable they are, each interpreting other. As also by persuading your hearts of the consistency of afflictions with divine love and favour ; and by studying to reconcile the hand and heart of God together. But especially converse with it practically, by a holy *establishment* and settlement of heart under all afflictions. For, whereas afflictions in themselves are apt to beget a fearfulnes, despondency, or at least fluctuation in the soul; the lively sense of God's faithfulness in inflicting

flicting them, will settle and sustain it: it is a firm and consistent thing upon which the shaking soul may settle safely, and enter itself boldly.

4. *Converse with the holiness and unspotted purity of God.* He is angry and sins not; he corrects for sin, without sin. *Fury is not in me, saith the Lord,* Isa. xxvii. 4. There is no passionate malicious temper in the pure and holy God; no revengeful appetite to feed up the blood of his creature. He is of purer eyes than to behold the least iniquity; and of a purer nature, than any way to miscarry in any of his dealings, or dispensations. Converse then with this infinite holiness of God: keep up pure, equitable, honourable thoughts of him in your hearts. Take heed of fancying to yourselves a God guilty of passion or partiality, or carried away with such weak and mixed affections as we ourselves are. But more practically, converse with God's holiness in the time of afflictions, by laying even little sins greatly to heart: little sins, compared with infinite holiness and purity, ought to be matter of great and serious sorrow to a sensible soul. Again take heed of the least miscarriages under affliction, of departing from God in the least. This I know is the great duty and care of every tender-hearted Christian at all times. But I conceive we ought more especially to press it upon our hearts in the time of affliction, because we are then most apt to indulge some kind of humane passions, which we call natural affections; as if we had a licence to care, and fear, and grieve, and complain, not only in an extraordinary, but even in an irregular manner. Oh let the sense of God's infinite purity and perfect holiness, check and

and awe those very natural affections, be they what they will, if they offer to exceed their bounds, and overflow their banks. But this I touched upon before under another head, amongst the reasons of the doctrine. Therefore.

5. *Converse with the almighty power of God.* That God is infinite and almighty in power, I need not undertake to demonstrate. No man hath read a leaf in scripture, nor indeed turned over one leaf in the book of the creatures, that hath not learnt this. I need not sure turn you to any particular mighty work of God: they that instance in his letting loose the virtues of the creatures, in the case of the universal deluge, or binding up their influences, as in the case of the three captive Jews; *Daniel* and *Zarah*; when he kept the fire from burning, and forbid the lions to eat one, and the fish to digest another prophet whom he had eaten, do make but a poor guess at almighty ness, but a faint essay to describe it. The creation of the least creature out of nothing, is an higher argument of divine power, than the command of the greatest that is already created. Eye God duly in the notion of a creator; yea, of a creator of your own souls and bodies, and you have enough to fill you with everlasting admiration, as *David* was filled, *Psal. cxxxix. 14. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* But it is not enough to eye and acknowledge, or admire; we must yet do more, if we will rightly converse with the almighty ness of God, viz. by the acts of reverence and dependence.

1. *Reverence that almighty and glorious God in your hearts,* who can bring quidlibet ex quolibet, any thing out of any thing, yea, out of nothing; yea any.

any thing to nothing in a moment. Reverence that power of God; that can pour contempt upon princes; that can bring *Job* the greatest of all the men of the east, to lie in the ashes, and make his bed in the dunghil; that can send home *Naomi* empty, who went out full and flourishing. Hath he done so by you, debased you when you were high, tumbled you down from the clouds, and rolled you in the dust, emptied you when you were full, withered you when fresh and flourishing? Let not God lose the glory of his almighty power: reverence that glorious hand of God.

2. Rest upon the same almighty God who can also bring up the same *Job* from the dunghil, and set him with princes, and fill empty *Naomi* with a famous offspring, throwing into her lap one of the ancestors of the *Messiah*, according to the flesh. The same power that caused your sun to go down at mid-day, when you least suspected, can also cause it to rise at midnight, when you least hope. Dwell not upon creature probabilities or improbabilities: but lift up thyself believing soul, and be assured, that God can do what he will, and he will do what is good for them that love him, according to the dictates of unfearable wisdom and goodness. Thou that art rolled in the dust, yet arise and roll thyself upon those almighty arms that brought thee thither, and are able to advance thee; as I have seen a child thrown off by his father, and thrown down to the ground in a seeming displeasure, yet clinging to the same hand, and would not let it go, till at length he rose up again by it: a fit emblem of a child of God, whom his heavenly father seems as if he had cast off.

off. The wounding hand of God is apt to amaze indeed, and to beget consternation and astonishment. But remember, the same hand that wounds, can also heal; he that breaks us, can also make up all our breaches: let this beget confidence and dependence. God never wounds deeper, than that he can easily bind up the wound again; never throws his people so low, as that they should be out of his reach. Take heed therefore of unseemly despiciencies; cast not away your confidence, which shall have a recompence, if ye maintain it: A recompence, I say; for that God that can recover the setting sun, and exalt it in its beauty and brightness, and doth so every morning; that can clothe the forlorn and naked trees with leaves, and fruits; that can recover the verdure of the withering grafs, and doth so every year; he can also cause light to arise to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, *Isa.* ix. 2.

He that could give unto *Amaziah* much more than that which he parted with at his command, *2 Chron.* xxv. 9. that could turn again the captivity of *Job*, and give him double for what he had taken from him, *Job* lxii. 10. he can surely make his people glad according to the days wherein he hath afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil, *Psal.* xc. 15. He can recompence and restore to his penitent people the fruits which the locusts and the caterpillers have consumed, according to his promise, *Joel* ii. 25. He can recompence to his people the comforts of health and liberty, which sickness hath consumed; the comforts of friends and relations, which the grave hath devoured. He that hath made the *springs dry*, *Jer.* li. 36.

li. 36. can as easily make the parching ground to become a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water, Isa. xxxv. 7. as you find both elegantly joined together, Psal. cvii. 33, 35. *He turneth water springs into dry grounds, & sic viceversa.* Say not therefore with the captive Jews, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. *Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost, &c.* For God can cause even those dry bones to live. Say not with that low spirited courtier; 2 King. vii. 19. *If the Lord should make windows in heaven,* might such plenty be in a Samaria? For he did accomplish it, and yet not rain it from Heaven. But say with Job rather, *Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,* Job xiii. 15. And with the three worthies, *Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O king.* iii. 17. So, he is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O enemy, O prison, O sickness, yea out of thine hand, O grave. If we despoad, and be dejected both in mind and body at the same time, then is our condition indeed sad and shameful: nay, we do more reproach God by such a temper in our affliction, than he reproacheth us in afflicting us. Make it appear christians, that though God hath cast you down, yet you do believe that he hath not cast you off; and that you, although you be sorely shaken by him, yet are not shaken off from him. Thus you shall glorify the almighty power of God in the day of your visitation.

6. Converse with the infinite and unsearchable wisdom of God: especially with the wisdom of God in reference to his judgments, and our afflictions. He is infinitely wise in reference to our afflictions. For,

i. He

1. *He knows what and what manner, and what measure of correction we stand in need of.*
2. *When and how best to deliver us.*
3. *How to make the best use of all for our good.*

First, *He knows what, and what manner, and what measure of correction we stand in need of.* He is that wise physician, that knows what humour is most predominant in the souls of his servants, and what is the most proper medicine to purge it out: where the most corrupt blood is settled, and at what vein to let it out. He is infinitely knowing of the various tempers and distempers of his servants, and can apply himself suitably to them all. And as to the measure and degree, he is also infinitely wise, and exact. He doth weigh out the afflictions of his people to a grain for quantity, and measure them to a day and hour for duration. He did not miss of his time no not one day in four hundred and thirty years, *Exod. xii. 41.* So many years of bondage were determined upon the people, and after those years were expired, the very next day, the hosts of the Lord went up out of Egypt. And as for measure, he observes a certain proportion, as you may see in that full text, *Isa. xxviii. 27, 28.* As the husbandman uses different ways of purging and cleansing different sorts of grain, *beating the fitches with a staff, and cummin with a rod,* because they are a weaker sort of grain, and will not endure hard usage; but *bruising the bread corn,* because threshing will not suffice, and he is loth to break it all to pieces with turning his cart-wheels upon it. An elegant similitude, whereby God insinuateth his different ways of correcting his people, and observing a suitableness

to their strength and temper, when less would not do, and more would over do. He must correct so far as to bruise ; but will be sure not to break and spoil. He that faith unto the proud waves of the swelling sea, *Hither shall ye come, and no further.* Job xxxviii. 11. hath the same command over these metaphorical waves, those floods of affliction, which he lets loose upon his people, and they cannot go an inch further than he hath appointed : he faith, hitherto shall this sickness, this mortality, this persecution go, and no further : and even these *storms*, and this *sea obey him*. Now we converse with this instance of divine wisdom, not only when we observe it, and acknowledge it; but,

i. *When it begets in us a friendly and charitable temper towards second causes*: when we are at peace with the whole creation, even with enemies themselves, and in perfect charity with those very plagues andicknesses that do arrest us : rather admiring and delighting in their subservency to God, than at all maligning their severe influences upon us. A good man is so much in love with the pure, and holy, and perfect will of God, that he desires also to fall in love with, at least he is at peace with every thing that excutes it, that serves the will of his heavenly father. He sees no reason in the world to fall out with, and fret against any man, or any thing that is a means to afflict him ; but views them all as instruments in the hand of God, readily serving his will, and doing his pleasure, and under this notion is charitably affected towards them all. Observe a little, and admire, how *David* was reconciled to the rod, because it was in the hand of his father, and seems to kiss it for the relation

relation that it had to the divine will, 2 Sam. xvi.  
 11. *Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.* This gracious soul is so wonderfully in love with the will of God, that he could almost find in his heart to be reconciled to sin itself, if it could accomplish it, and to be friends with the *wrath of man*, if it work the *righteousness of God*. And if David can be so charitably affected towards a cursing Simeon, viewing him as an instrument in the hand of God; methinks we may be almost in love with any thing under that notion, and much rather say concerning a poor harmless sickness, let it alone, so let it put us to pain, for God hath sent it. To this sense may a devout soul draw the words of his Saviour concerning the woman in Matt. xxvi. 10. *Why trouble ye the woman? She hath wrought a good work upon me:* why do ye interrupt and disturb this disease? Why do ye fret against this persecutor? Why do you repine at this prison? It executes the will of my God upon me. What though these men pour out their venom in such abundance? What though disease spend its influences upon my body so plentifully? There is *no waste* in all this; there is need of just so much; God doth not lavish out his arrows in vain, nor shoot at rovers, as Jonathan did, who couzened his lad, making him believe he shot at a mark when he shot at none. A soul overpowered with the sense of God's infinite wisdom in appointing, measuring, timing all afflictions, will easily be reconciled to a poor harmless creature, which is set on, and taken off at his pleasure.

2. *When it begets in us a holy acquiescence and resting*

*resting in God*, which is opposed to a greater and disorderly hastning towards deliverance. Then do we indeed own and honour the skill of our chirurgeon, when we quietly suffer the corrosive plaisters to lie on, and do not offer to pluck them off, notwithstanding the smart they put us to. And surely he that believeth the infinite wisdom of God, who knows, both what manner and measure of correction we stand in need of, will not *make haste* to be delivered from under his hand; but composeth himself quietly; as young *Samuel* laid himself down, and when he was called, answered chearfully, *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.*

A soul sensible of God's infinite wisdom in this particular, argues thus, Who am I poor worm, shallow creature, that I should contend with infinite wisdom about the time or manner of my being in the world? Why did not I also undertake to appoint him the time and place of my being born? Shall I say it is too much, when infinite wisdom thinks it is enough? Cease wrangling soul, and be at rest, for the Lord deals wisely with thee. Such a soul so conversing with the all-wise God, dares freely refer all to him, venture all with him; if he smite him on *the one cheek*, he *dare turn to him the other*; if he take away his coat, he dare offer him his cloak also; if he take away his liberty, he dare trust him with his life too; if he smite him in some of his comforts, he dare turn to him the rest also; for he knows that infinite wisdom cannot err in judgment, nor miscarry in his dispensations.

Secondly, *God knoweth when, and how, best to deliver us.* This necessarily follows upon the former

former. To him all times, and all things past, present, and to come, are equally present: in one single act of understanding, he doth wonderfully comprehend both causes and events, sicknesses and cures, afflictions and deliverances. Let the Atheistical world cry; these are they that are forsaken, whom no man careth for; there is no hope for them in their God, as their manner is to blaspheme. Still the promise stands unrepealed in both testaments, *I will never leave you, nor forsake you*: though the case be ever so extreme and desperate, still the apostle's words hold good, 2 Pet. ii. 9. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.* If all passages be blocked up, he will rather make a gap in the sea, than his people shall not escape, Exod. xiv. And this way and time of God's delivering, is the most excellent, suitable, and certain, as might abundantly appear in many particulars; but that would be a digression. In the general, be assured that God's way is the best way of deliverance, and his time is also the best time. He that fits as a *refiner of silver*, knows how, and when to take out the metal, that it be purified, and not hurt. Here I might enter into a large discourse, and shew you how the judgment of man is ordinarily deceived, and his expectations disappointed, which he had built upon creature probabilities, when in the mean time the purpose of God takes place in a far better and more comfortable deliverance of his servants. But it may suffice to have hinted it only.

Our duty is to converse with this instance of divine wisdom by the exercises of *patience* and *hope*.

If God seems to tarry long, yet wait patiently for his appearance, for he will appear in the most acceptable time, and *in the end ye shall consider it*, and acknowledge it. Take heed of limiting the holy one of *Israel*, as that murmuring generation did, *Psal. lxxviii. 14.* Take heed of fixing your deliverance to such or such a train and series of causes which you have laid in your own heads, and of engaging God to act by your method: if God be a wise agent, it is fit he should be a free agent too. Bear up christian soul, faint not when thou art rebuked of him; *Cast thy burthen upon the Lord*, and he will in due time, find out a way either of lessening it, or removing it. *You have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the end of the Lord*, Jam. v. 11. Be you patient, and you shall see it too; a better end than ever you could have accomplished by your own art or industry. In the mean time, cherish in your hearts a lively hope of an happy issue: for your lives and comforts are all hid in him, in whom also are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. As the consideration of infinite wisdom in knowing how, and when, best to deliver us, may settle our hearts that they do not rise up as a foam upon the waters through impatience; so it may bear up our hearts, that they do not sink within us, as a stone in the waters through desperation.

Thirdly, *God knoweth how to make the best use of all for our good.* I say, of all, both of the affliction, the manner and measure of it, of his delay and of the season which he chuses to redeem

deem us in. He can make *Paul's* imprisonment turn to his advantage, *Phil. i. 19.* *Job's* captivity redound to his far greater state. *Job ult.* *Joseph's* banishment, to make him great; and *Manasse's*, to make him good. This is a large theme, and therefore I dare not rifle into it particularly. Take all in one word from the apostle, *Rom. viii. 28.* *All things work together for good to them that love God.* What ever the premises be, the only wise God knows how to draw a happy conclusion from them. Get a firm belief of this radicated in your hearts, and converse with the wisdom of God in this instance of it, by the great grace of *self-resignation*. The sovereignty of God may well work us into a humble resignation of our interests, and comforts, and concernments to him; but this infinite wisdom of God ought in reason to work us into resignation even of our very wills unto him. Oh this debasing of self-will, this self-resignation is a noble and ingenuous act of a pious soul, for so I dare call him in whom it is found, whereby it honours God greatly in all that comes upon it. A godly soul considering itself ignorant of many things, burdened with many corruptions, and clogged with an animal body, senses, appetite, fancy, which are always calling for things inconvenient, if not unlawful, doth conclude it would not be good for it to be at its own finding, or caring, or carving: and duly eying, that infinite mind and understanding, who in a wonderful, unaccountable manner, orders all things, and all events to the best and certain issue, is so mastered by, and indeed enamoured with the sense of it; that he renounces his own wisdom and

throws out his own clamorous will, and complies readily with the all-wise God. This is truly to converse with the wisdom of God, when we do out of choice refer ourselves to it, and roll ourselves upon it. Every bare acknowledgment of divine wisdom is not a proper conversing with it; but when the same is wrought into the soul, and the lively sense of it doth so overpower the heart that the will is prepared to close readily with such methods as God shall please to use to accomplish his own ends; then we do properly, and feelingly converse with God, under the notion of the all-wise God. But this of self-resignation, I spoke something to under the first head; and much of that which is spoken there, may be indifferently applied hither. Therefore,

7. Converse with the unbounded *goodness, love, and mercy of God.* God is infinitely and unchangeably loving and merciful to his people: He is *good*, saith the psalmist, and he is *love*, saith the apostle, *1 John iv. 8.* Those dreadful and terrifying apprehensions which men have of the blessed and good God, as if he were some austere and surly majesty, given to passion and revenge, are apt to destroy that cheerful and ingenuous converse with him, which the creature should maintain with its creator at all times: but then are we most prone to entertain those apprehensions, and to harbour such unseemly notions of him, when he appears in the way of his judgements, when we take a view of him in the ruins of our comforts, the blood of our friends, the spoil of our goods, and in the distresses of our lives. We are apt to frame notions of God according to what we find in

In our own disposition, to fancy a God like unto ourselves; and therefore we cannot eye an afflicting God but we presently conclude an angry God; as though the eternal and pure Being were subject to passions and changes, as we are. These apprehensions being once drank into the soul, it becomes unhinged presently, and almost afraid to behold the face of love itself, but flies and hides itself, as *Adam* in the garden: or if the soul do converse with God at all, it is as a city that is besieged converses with the enemy without, *viz.* sending out to seek peace, and to obtain a cessation of arms. And so a soul may bestow much upon God, surrender up the castle, give him all that he hath almost, not for any love that he bears to him; but as *Joash* gave *Hazael* a present of gold and precious things, to hire him to depart from him, 2 *King* xii. 18. Oh then they will up and do any thing; yea, circumcise their lives, as *Zipporah* circumcised her son, *Exod.* iv. 25. to escape the hands of an angry God. Every one will converse with God as an enemy in time of extremity; hang out a flag for peace, send presents, pay a homage, send ambassadors, to entreat his face: but few know how to converse with the goodness and mercy of God, with him as their dear and only friend in the time of affliction, freely and cheerfully. Now there seems to be a double account to be given of mens not conversing with the goodness and mercy of God in the time of afflictions.

1. *Many cannot believe the mercy and kindness of God, when he is in the way of his judgments.* If it be so, Why am I thus? cries the poor soul, struggling

ling under its burden, and travelling in pangs to be delivered of its griefs. Thus unbelievingly argues *Gideon* (who was otherwise famous for faith) in the time of his bitter bondage under the *Midianites*, Judge. vi. 13. when an angel from Heaven was sent to assure him of the good will of God towards him, he could not entertain the news, nor believe the report, because of the anguish of his soul, but cries out, *Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why is all this befallen us?* No, the Lord hath forsaken us; for he hath delivered us into the hands of the *Midianites*. The sad soul is ready to cry concerning Christ's gracious presence, as the two sisters concerning his personal presence, Job. xi. 21, 32. *Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died:* Lord, if thou hadst been here, if thou hadst loved me, if thou hadst had any delight in me, my brother had not died, my husband, my wife, my children had not died; I had not been thus plagued, afflicted, wounded, tormented as I am. Hence we have those many complaints of the afflicted soul, up and down the psalms; *Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy clean gone? Hath he shut up his tender mercies in anger?* And many such like. The smart of our senses, is apt to pervert the judgment of our minds; and the sense of bodily evils, is ready to destroy all sense of the infinite and unchangeable goodness and love of God. Now this great evil seems to arise from these two causes, viz. *Our measuring God and his divine dispensations by ourselves, and human passions and affections,* as I hinted before: *and our measuring the love of God too much by the proportion that he gives us of worldly prosperity.*

Woe

Woe to him in a day of distress, that was wont to judge of divine love by the things that are before him, as *Solomon* calls the things of this world. *Eccles.* ix. 1. This, I say is the temper, the infirmity of many in the time of afflictions: though indeed there be no reason for it. For why should we conclude harshly concerning *Job* upon the dung-hill, any more than we would conclude charitably concerning *Abab* on the throne? Besides the scripture teacheth expressly, that the love of God doth stand with correction, *Psal.* lxxxix. 33. I will visit his iniquity, but my loving kindness will I not take from him: nay, it seems as if it could not well stand without it, *Heb.* xii. 6. *Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

2. Others do indeed believe the goodness and mercy of God to them in a time of affliction, *but either they cannot, or dare not, or will not converse with it, nor take comfort from it.* They remember God with the psalmist, *Psalm lxxvii.* iii. i. e. the goodness, bounty, mercy of God, faith *Mollerus*, and yet at the same time are troubled; their hearts are unquiet, fluctuating, tumultuous within them. The soul is so imprest with the sense of sin which it hath contracted, from the consideration of its sufferings, that it dare not presume to meddle with mercy, but though this mercy of God be its own, yet it is ready to think that it is a duty to forsake its own mercies as though it heard God chiding it in the words of *Jehu* to *Jeram's* scout, *2 King.* ix. 18. *What hast thou to do with peace? What hast thou to do with mercy? Turn thee behind me.* An afflicted soul hath much ado to believe it to be a duty

duty to converse with the goodness and love of God in a time of affliction. It easily agrees to converse with the justice, holiness, and power of God indeed; but thinks it very improper, and unseasonable, if not unsafe, to converse with his mercy. It is ready to cry with *Solomon* presently, *In the day of prosperity rejoice, but in the day of adversity consider*: or with the apostle, *If any be afflicted, let him pray*; if he be merry, let him sing psalms. Conversing with the goodness of God seems not to be a duty of this season. I confess this is a high and hard duty. Every smatterer in religion will cry out in his affliction, *Thou art just and righteous, O Lord*: But, thou art good and merciful: Blessed be the name of the Lord, is the voice of a *Job* only, *Job.* i. 21. But it is a duty, though a hard one; and affording much pleasure and contentment to them that are exercised therein. That the kindness and benignity of God doth not fail, that his love is not broken off from his people; no nor suspended when he afflicts them most, is most certain. For, though he worketh changes, in and upon us, yet himself is eternally and unchangeably the same, *Jer.* i. 17. And though some of his dealings towards his people seem to be rough and severe, yet if we judge rightly of them, they are all mercy and truth toward them that keep his covenant, *Psal.* xxv. 10. And that the people of God ought to converse with this divine love and mercy even in their greatest afflictions, is clear: to this purpose I might alledge the fore-quoted example of holy *Job*; and might enforce this doctrine from the apostle's words, *Phil.* iv. 4. and *Jam.* i. 2. *Count it all joy when*

*when ye fall into divers temptations: and from many good reasons too, if it were needful.* I know indeed that it is a hard thing to keep up a right frame towards, and converse rightly with the righteousness, and goodness of God at the same time, the one frame is ready to jostle out the other. Sorrow is apt to contract the heart, and destroy the large and cheerful temper of it: and joy doth dilate and enlarge it, and is ready to make it forget its grief: but though it be hard, yet it is possible: these two may well consist in the same soul, according to that in *Psal. ii. 11. rejoice with trembling.*

But how must we converse with the love and mercy of God in the time of afflictions? I have partly prevented myself in this already; but I shall speak a little more distinctly of it. We do not then converse with the goodness and mercy of God, when we barely think of it, or acknowledge it; But,

1. *When we believe and apply it, and take to ourselves the comforts of it.* When we look through the clouds that are round about us, and quite cover us, and by the eye of faith behold the fountain and father of light, when we can look beyond the frowns that are in his face, and the rod that is in his hand, and see the good will that dwells in the heart of God towards us. More especially,

2. *When we do not only fee and believe it, but also draw virtue and influences down from it into our souls, to establish, settle, and satisfy them.* Not so much when we see it, as when we taste it; when we feel the sun of righteousness warm us, though it do not dazzle us; and though we cannot per-

perceive it to shine upon us, yet we find it to shine in us. We do then converse with the love and mercy of God in an afflicted state, when the same doth bear us, not only from utter sinking, but even from inordinate sorrowing; when we draw a virtue from it into our souls to sustain them, yea and to cherish them too. Thus *Job comforts himself* in his living redeemer, *Job xix. 25.* and the psalmist in the mercy of God, even when he was ready to slip, *Psal. xciv. 18, 19.* *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.* In a word, we converse with divine goodness, when we are really warmed with it; and with almighty love, when we rejoice in it, and can with holy venturousness, and humble confidence throw ourselves into the very bosom of it: when we receive impressions of it from the spirit of God, and are thereby moulded into a temper suitable to it, and becoming it. For then indeed do we most happily converse with the love and goodness of God, when we for our part do live upon it; when we being assured of an interest in a loving and good God, do render up ourselves also unto him, in the most beautiful and becoming affections of love, joy, confidence, and holy delight. This is an excellent frame; and sure I am, it is much for our interest thus to converse with God in the time of our afflictions. It is a high way of glorifying God, and bringing much credit to religion: and indeed he that keeps up this frame, can be afflicted but in part; he escapes the greater half of the evil: for though it be never so stormy a time without him, a storm upon his house, upon his goods, upon his relations, yea upon his own body; yet

yet it is a calm day within; in the soul there is peace and tranquillity.

Lastly, and indeed everlasting too, we are to converse with the infinite, *self-sufficient fulness of God*, in a day of the greatest extremity: that is, as if I should say, not with any one single attribute, but with the very God-head of God, the immense perfection of God, the whole of the deity. Oh how seasonably doth this blessed object present itself to the soul in a time of afflictions, losses, mortalities, persecutions, when we are most emptied of creature enjoyments, and the emptiness of them doth most appear! for upon these two doth our conversing with God much depend. I need not tell you how apt we are to live beside God when we have our fill of creature delights; whilst we can entertain our hearts with a created sweetness, we foolishly forget and neglect the supreme good. And so fond and unreasonable is this affection, that no warnings, no precepts will serve the turn; God is forced to break that off from us, from which we would not be broken. Sure I am, the blessed and bountiful God envies not his servants any of their creature-comforts or delights; but he loves them, as I said before, with a strong and powerful love, and will not suffer them to live so much to their loss, as they do, when they spend noble affections upon transitory things, in the everlasting enjoyment of which they could never be happy. Now afflictions are a negative, if we speak properly, even as sin is; and when ever we are afflicted in any kind, we are emptied of some created good, as poverty is nothing but the absence of riches: sickness

ness the want of ease, of order, of health in the constitution: restraint is the loss of liberty, &c. So then it appears, that in a time of affliction, God is emptying us of creature-enjoyments: for indeed affliction itself is little or nothing else but such an emptying or deprivation. And that then the emptiness of the creature doth most appear, I suppose all will grant. The sick person looks upon his decayed strength, and withering members, and is feelingly convinced of the truth of the scripture, *All flesh is grass.* Another casts about his eyes with Sampson, and sees *heaps upon heaps,* and cries out like one that feels the weight of his own words, *Childhood and youth are vanity:* or alas! how soon is the *desire of one's eyes taken away with a stroke!* Another sees his goods carried away before his face; and his house on fire before his eyes, and then cries out, that he hath a real proof of the vanity of those things, which Solomon had long ago observed, *Pro. xxiii. 5. Riches take themselves wings and fly away as an eagle towards heaven.* Whilst we see the creatures stand, we will not believe but they are stable; whilst we see them fair and flourishing, we cannot rightly lay to heart the withering nature of them: but when we see them *cut down,* we then conclude they were but *flowers;* when we see them *fitting,* we conclude they are *shadows;* when God *pours them out upon the ground,* we are then convinced that they were unstable as water: to shew us what the best of our creature-enjoyments are, God is forced to take them quite away, that they be no more.

Now

Now then in such a case, at such a time, compare with the infinite, self-sufficient fulness of God. Oh now it is seasonable; now it is your duty; nay now it will be your greatest policy! If that chanel, that creature-chanel be stopped, in which your affections were wont to run too freely; turn the stream of them into their proper chanel in which they may run freely, and never meet with obstruction, or ever over-flow. Let your soul grow up into acquaintance and union with God by creature-breaches and disappointment. More particularly, converse with the self-sufficient fulness of God.

i. By the act of *creature-denial*. The eying of an infinite, absolute, uncreated fulness in a right manner, takes off the soul from all created objects, earthly things: even as the beholding the sun in its glory, dazzles the eye to all things below. God becomes so great in the eye of the soul, that it cannot see the poor motes of worldly comforts. Give a soul a feeling taste of the infinite sweetnes and fulness of the fountain, and its thirst after the poor puddles of the world is presently abated, if not perfectly quenched, according to that of our Saviour, John iv. 14. *Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst;* that is, after any other thing. Like unto which is that gospel promise, Isa. xlix. 10. *they shall not thirst, who do enjoy these springs of water.* When this fountain is opened to the eye of the soul, and the soul begins to taste of it, it longs to drink deeper of that indeed, but as for all other waters, waters of the cistern, the soul looks upon them not being, or at least as being bitter, waters of

*Marab* in comparison ; we do then truly converse with the infinite, self-sufficient fulness of God, when we look upon all created good with a noble disdain, are content to part with it ; or if we still enjoy it, are resolved to enjoy it only in God, and so look upon it, and love it, only as a beam from the father of lights ; as a drop of the infinite fountain of all perfections. Tell me, is it not a poor and low thing that many professors do, who acknowledge and magnify the uncreated goodness, the fulness of God ; and yet at the same time covet and court the creature with all eagerness ; and their worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion ? Methinks I hear God speaking to such seeming friends, as *Delilah* to *Sampson*, Judg. xvi. 15. How can ye say, you love me, when your heart is not with me ? To these mens hearts, methinks our Saviour's doctrine should strike cold, Matt. vi. 21. *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also :* and those words of his beloved apostle, John ii. 15. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Let a man pretend and profess what he will ; and in words magnify the fulness and sufficiency of God as much as he will ; if in the mean time his soul be bound up in the creature, such a man's religion is vain : nay indeed his profession of God becomes a real reproaching him, and a blasphemy against reason itself. Let your low esteem of all created good in comparison of the supreme good, your readiness to quit your title to every creature-comfort, and in the mean time, your care to live beside it, witness the true and honourable esteem, the true and feeling sense that you have in your hearts

hearts of the infinite and self-sufficient fulness of God. For, however men may make a shift to cheat themselves, God is not truly great in the soul, till all other things become as nothing, neither doth the soul rightly converse with his infinite fulness, so long as any thing stands in opposition to it, or competition with it.

2. *Converse with the self-sufficient fulness of God by the grace of faith*: I mean by that act of it, whereby we do interest ourselves, and as it were wrap up our own souls in this fulness, and make it our own. And herein there is no danger of an humble soul's being too bold or venturous: for the proclamation is full, and the invitation free, Isa. iv. 1. John vii. 37. Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* What Seneca says of the soul in regard of the divine original of it, may sure be better said of a godly soul, in respect of the divine nature, and qualities of it, *illum divina delectant, nec ut alienis interest sed ut suis;* it doth not converse with things divine, as with another's, but as its own. And indeed we cannot truly and comfortably converse with the infinite perfection and fulness of God, if we have no title to it: but then we converse with God, when we converse with our own God, not another's: when the soul is able to say, all this fulness of power, wisdom, goodness, is all mine in my head Christ Jesus, for in him *all* this fulness dwells, Col. ii. 9. and he dwelleth in me; *in him are hid all these treasures,* Col. ii. 3. and *my life also is hid with Christ in God,* as theirs was in Col. iii. 3. You see then, that a soul cannot converse with the infinite fulness and self-sufficiency

of God, but by Christ ; for it is in and by him that we receive of divine fulness, *John i. 16.* Hence was that of the devout father, *tolle meum, tolle Deum* ; to which I may add, *Tolle Jesum, & tollis meum.* The fulness of a fountain is nothing to me, except it be mine. There is bread enough in my father's house, says the poor prodigal, but for all that I perish with hunger : so there are living waters evermore in this uncreated life; this infinite spring of all perfections ; yet many souls are choaked with thirst, because the fountain is not theirs ; it is a fountain sealed, as *Solomon* speaks in another case ; *The well is deep;* and they have *nothing to draw with,* as the woman said concerning another well, *John iv.* Therefore be sure you get an interest in the fulness and sufficiency of God ; or as *Solomon* speaks in another case, *Prov. v. 15.* Drink waters out of thine own well.

3. *Converse with the self-sufficient fulness of God;* by delighting yourselves in it. Drink of this fountain, yea drink abundantly ye beloved of God, *Cant. v. 1.* yea, lie down by it, *Psal. xxiii.* 2. yea, bathe yourselves wholly in it ; *Enter into the joy of your Lord,* lie down in his bosom, spread yourselves in his love and fulnes. The beloved disciple leaning upon the breast of his Lord at supper, was but a dark shadow, a poor scant resemblance of a beloved soul ; which by the lovely acts of joy and confidence, and delight, lays itself down in the bosom of Jesus, and doth not feed with him, but feed upon him, and his all-sufficiency. Then do we converse indeed feelingly and comfortably with the infinite fulnes, when the soul is swallowed up in

in it, doth rest in it, is filled with it, and center upon it. Oh the noble and free-born spirit true religion, that disdaining the pursuit of created things is carried out with delight feed, and dwell, and live upon uncreated fulness! Then is a soul raised to its just altitude, to the very height of its being, when it can spend all its powers upon the supreme and self-sufficient good, spreading and stretching itself upon God with full contentment, and wrapping up itself entirely in him. This is the soul's way of living above losses; and he that so lives, though he may often be a loser, yet shall never be at a loss. He who will feed upon creature-goodness or sweetnes, may soon eat himself ou all; the stock will be spent, and which is worse the soul will be dried up, that hath nothing else nourish it. But he that lives upon uncrea fulness, is never at a loss, though he lose never much of the creature: for who will value spilling a dish of water, that hath a well living water at his door, from whence he had and can have more as good, though not the same? Nay, to speak properly, this is the only way to lose nothing. For how can he be properly to lose any thing, who possesseth all things? And doth he I am sure, who is filled with the fulness of God. Be sure therefore, that in the way the loss of all things, you live upon the fulness, delight yourself in the Lord, after the example of the prophet, *Habakkuk, cap. iii.*

I have gone through the doctrinal part of my discourse upon these words, which was the main object I mainly intended. Many inferences

drawn from it. But I shall content myself to forbid, and so as it were to remove out of the way, some things that hinder this great duty; and so shut up all with one word of exhortation.

*Converse not with creature-comforts,* the poor, low, and scant enjoyments of this world: for so I may well call them, though they be never so high in the opinion of them that have them, and never so large as to the proportion that any one hath of them: They are low in comparison of that high and supreme good for which the soul was made; and scant as to any real happiness, or satisfaction that they can possible give. For indeed those sinful and sensual souls that take up their rest and happiness most in them, are not properly satisfied, but surfeited; not filled, but for the present glutted with them. There are many unlawful, and hurtful ways of the soul's conversing with created comforts: I will not run thorough them all, as not intending any large discourse upon these heads. Converse not with them, fondly delighting in them, and doating upon them: especially take heed of this when God is shaking his rod over any of them. Doth God arise and begin to plead with you in judgment, laying his hand upon any of these, and threatening to take them from you? Oh then *hands off!* touch them not. What an unseemly, and indeed monstrous sight is it to see a creature pulling and tagging against his Creator, and maintaining his supposed right against heaven itself! Is it for a heaven-born soul to stand gazing and doating upon, or passionately weeping over created friends, carnal liberty, corporal health, houses made with hands, things below God, yea, and

and below itself too? Pore not too much upon them; value them only in God, and refer them freely to him. If you can say, you have any thing of your own, make much of it, and spare not: but give unto God the things that are God's, and by that time you have done so, I think you need not dote upon what's left. We ought indeed at all times to enjoy all our creature comforts with hearts loosened from them: but if formerly our hearts have been too much joined to them, it is time now to loosen them.

2. *Converse not with creature causes in a time of affliction.* This is a strange kind of Atheistical temper, into which we are very prone to fall: I speak properly, when I say, fall, for it is indeed a falling down from God in our hearts, in whose infinite essence all creature-causes are lapt up; and in whose hand the several successes and events of them all lie. Let a beast that judges by sense, kick at the poor thorn that pricks him: but let rational souls fix upon the highest and supreme agent, who in an infinite powerful and skilful manner, uses what creature he will, for what end he will, and sends it of an errand which itself knows not. Why do we run hunting poor partridge-instruments upon the mountains of contemplation? Shall the noble faculties of an immortal soul spend themselves upon such an inquisition? Or is it just to pursue an innocent creature out of breath for being an instrument in the band of God? To quarrel with the sword, because it suffered itself to be drawn, or beat the air, because it is infected? This were indeed to go out with the king of *Israel*, with much warlike preparation,

ration, to catch fleas.\* I deny not but that wise men may look into second causes, and make many profitable observations from them, both for present and future; and all men may and ought to learn many wholesome lessons even from the instrument that afflicts them: but sure I am, a godly man will not dwell upon these; he will not fix here, but readily resolve all into an higher cause, and so falls to converse with that: much less will he blame or murmur at a poor harmless arrow, that flew no further than it was shot, nor pierced deeper than it was bidden. Yea, though the second cause were a sinful cause, a rational agent, and so consequently acted by malicious and evil principles; yet a godly soul knows how to distinguish between him and his action: he hates him as a sinner; but comports well enough with him as God's instrument: and though he condemns his action as it varies from God's command, yet he approves of it as being ordered by God's hand and counsel. *David* hated cursing as much as any man; yet did he so eye the hand of God in every thing, and comply with it too, that there was a time when he said concerning *Shimei*, *Salet him curse.* Concerning this I hinted something before under another head. Therefore,

3. *Converse not with creature-cures, creature-relief.* These may indeed be looked out after, and safely made use of when they are found: Nay, I will add further, that they are to be sought diligently, and used carefully. They who know the infinite sovereignty, power and wisdom of God, will not tye him to means, much less to these or

\* Alluding to *1 Sam.* xxvi. 20..

those:

those particular means : but on the other hand, they who understand God's usual and ordinary way of acting and governing, and upholding the world, will not tye him up from means ; no, nor expect that he shoulde appear for their relief immediately and miraculously. Though if any one have a miraculous faith truly grounded upon some special and particular promise, I will not contend with him, only I would desire to see his miraculous faith justified by some miraculous works, which I conceive do always attend it. But the converse with creature-cures which I forbid, is the immoderate seeking them, or the inordinate using them. To seek after means in themselves unlawful, can never become lawful : but I speak not of these. For although some are come to that height of Atheism and abjuration of God, as to retain the Devil himself for a counsel in a time of straits, as *Saul* did : and contract with the prince of death for the preservation of life in time of sickness, as *Abariah* did : and I doubt very many fall into acquaintance with that evil spirit, and receive assistance from him before they be well aware, by meddling with unphysical, unscriptural, unwarrantable cures : yet the greatest danger is not in these: *in licitis perimus omnes*, the greatest danger is of miscarrying about things in themselves lawful. And that is chiefly by those two ways which I named but now. Take heed therefore of immoderate seeking after created helps. Be not anxious, perplexed, tormented in mind by a paffionate desire of any of these. Oh what a raging and unquenchable thirst have many men after creature-cures ! They will move heaven and earth,

earth, and almost hell too (with her in the post) but they will find out relief. Give me a physician, or I die, says one; give me a trading, good markets, a plentiful crop, or I am undone, says another. What man is thy life, apt upon the pillars, or incorporated into a portion? Is thy main happiness in the abundance of these things here below? Or wilt thou say to the wind, blow here in this quarter, and no where else; tye up the supreme and free agent to a form and method of working? Let not such a profane disposition be found amongst us. Again, if you have found out hopeful creature-cures, take heed of using them in an insordinate manner, laying stress upon them, looking earnestly on them, as though they by their own power and proper virtue could make the lame to walk, or the sick to recover. Eye not much less depend upon the virtue of any created means, as distinct from God. But acknowledge the power, and virtue, and goodness of every created being, to be the power, and virtue and goodness, of God in that creature; and so consequently use it in subordination and subervency to the supreme cause, who can at pleasure, let loose, or suspend the influences and virtues of every such means.

4. *Converse not with creature-losses in a time of affliction.* The sinful soul that hath strayed off from God, and centered upon the creature, is always intemperate and restless: if it be disappointed in its converse with creature-cares, and sees that for all these, his comforts are cut off, health, liberty, friends, are perished; then he falls to converse with his losses, and spends the powers of his soul in discontents, complaints, and many dismal

passions. Oh then, alas, I am undone ! What  
 shall I do for the hundred talents ! I am the only  
 man that hath seen affliction ; no sorrow like unto my  
 sorrow : I shall go softly all my days, for the joy of  
 my heart is perished, the delight of my eyes is cut  
 off. Thus Rachael weeps for her children, and will  
 not be comforted : Rizpah attends the carcases of  
 her sons, and will not be parted from them, 2 Sam.  
 21. It is a strange thing that a foul should live up-  
 on its losses : and yet how many do so ! Their very  
 soul cleaveth to the dust, where their creature-  
 comforts are interred ; whose souls are so much  
 bound up in the creature, that they will needs  
 live and die together with them. If God shall smite  
 the gourd, and make it wither, Jonah droops,  
 and will needs die too, Jonah iv. 8 9. If Joseph  
 be missing a while, Jacob will not be comforted ;  
 no, he will go down into the grave unto his son  
 mourning, Gen. xxxvii. 35. Who would have  
 thought to have heard such words, from such wise  
 men, as a prophet and a patriarch ! oh the strange  
 and unbounded power which this unseemly crea-  
 ture-love hath obtained over the best of men ! which  
 makes me call him a happy man, almost more  
 than a man, compeer of angels, who hath learnt to  
 converse with God alone. Well, converse not  
 with creature-losses ; let not your foul take up its  
 lodging by the carcases of your created-comforts,  
 with Rizpah ; dwell not upon the lowest round of  
 the ladder, but climb up by it to the meaning  
 of God, and to some higher good, and more ex-  
 cellent attainment. They live to their loss, who  
 live upon their losses ; who dwell upon the dark  
 side of the dispensation : for every dark providence  
 hath

Hath one bright side, wherein a godly soul may take comfort, if he be not wanting to himself.

5. *Converse not with flesh and blood.* By flesh and blood, I suppose the apostle means no more than men, Gal. i. 16. And indeed, if we confer with men only for counsel, and repair to men only for comfort in a time of affliction, we shoot short of the mark. But by flesh and blood the scripture elsewhere often means, man in this his animal state, as he is in his corruptible, mortal body, as in Cor. xv. 50; and many other places. And in this sense I speak, when I say converse not with flesh and blood. Judge not according to your senses; let not your own sensual appetite determine what is good or evil, sweet or bitter: consult with rectified reason, and not with brutish appetite; confer with faith, and not with fancy. Rectified reason will judge that to be really good, which our sensual appetite distastes: an enlightened mind will judge that to make for the interest of the soul, and its eternal happy state, which sense judges hurtful to the interest of the body, and its animal state. It is not possible there should be any order, nor consequently any peace or rest in that soul, where the inferior faculties domineer over the superior, and sensitive powers lord it over the intellectual; and where raging appetite, and extravagant fancy must clamber up into the throne to determine cases, and right reason must stoop and bow before it.

Be admonished to fly converse with all these; if you would converse rightly, purely, properly, comfortably with God, which is the highest office and attainment of created nature. Consider what I have

I have said concerning this excellent and high employment; and awaken your souls, and all the powers of them to meet the Lord God; and converse with him aright in the way of his judgments. Converse with God, with God in Christ, with God in his promises, with God in his attributes, and labour to do it not speculatively, notionally, but really; practically, accordingly as I have directed in the foregoing discourse. Religion is not an empty, airy, notional thing; it is not a matter of thinking, nor of talking; but it hath a real existence in the soul, and doth as really distinguish, though not specifically, one man from another, as reason distinguishes all men from beasts: converse with God is set out in scripture, by living, and walking, and the like. Let me indicate this thing therefore again, and press it upon you, and I shall finish all: As the way of glorifying God in the world, is not by a mere thinking of him, or entertaining some notion of his glory in our heads, but consists in a real participation of his image, in a god-like disposition, and holy conversation, according to that of our Saviour, John xv. 8. *Herein is my father glorified, &c.* So the way of conversing with God in his several attributes, is not a thinking often with ourselves, and telling one another that God is just, wise, merciful, &c. though this be good: but it is a drinking in the virtue and value of these divine perfections, a working of them into the soul; and on the other hand, the soul's rendering itself up to God in those acts of grace which suit with such attributes, as in water, face answereith to face. I do not call bare performance of duties a conver-

sing with God; prayer and meditation, &c. are excellent means in and by which our soul converses with God; but communion with God is properly somewhat more spiritual, real, powerful, and divine, according as I described it just now. As for example; the soul receives the impressions of divine *sovereignty* into it, and gives up itself unto God in the grace of *self-denial*, and humble subjection. The soul receives the communications of divine *fulness* and perfection, and entertains the same with *delight* and *complacency*; and, as it were, grows full in them. Even as the communications of the virtues of the sun are answered with life, and warmth, and growth in the plants of the earth; so a soul's conversing with the attributes of God, is not an empty notion of them; or a dry discourse concerning them, but a *reception* of *impressions* from them, and a *reciprocation* to them: the effluxes of these from God, are such as beget reflexions in man towards God. This is to know Christ, to grow up in him into all things, according to that in 1 John iii. 6. *Whosoever sineth, hath not seen him, neither known him,*



A

## FAREWEL TO LIFE.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 6.

WHILST WE ARE AT HOME IN THE BODY, WE ARE ABSENT FROM THE LORD.

**T**HE holy apostle having in the first verse of this chapter laid down the doctrine of eternal glory, which shall follow upon this transitory life of believers, shews in the following verses how he himself longed within himself, and groaned after that happy state : and then proceeds to give a double ground of this his confident expectation ; one in *ver. v.* therefore is the apostle confident concerning

ing the putting off this mortal body, because God had wrought and formed him for this state of glory, and already given him an earnest of it even his holy spirit: the other ground of the confidence and settledness of his mind as to his desires of a change, is taken from his present state in the body, which was but poor and uncomfortable in comparison of that glorious state! Thus in the words of the text, *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.* For I do not take the words [we are confident] concerning the apostle's resolvedness with a quiet and sober mind to suffer any kind of persecution or affliction whatever; but *we are always confident, i. e. we do with confidence expect, or at least we are always well satisfied, contented, well resolved in our minds concerning our departure out of this life;* for the apostle was speaking, not of afflictions or persecutions in the former verses but indeed of death; which he calls a dissolving of the earthly house of this tabernacle, *vers. 1.* and a being cloathed upon with our house which is from heaven, *vers. 2. 4.* Yea, and thus the apostle explains himself, *vers. 8.* where he tells you what he means by this his confidence, *we are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body;* where the latter words are exegetical to the former, q. d. "It is better to be with the Lord, than in this mortal body; but we cannot be with the Lord, while we are in this body, it keeps us from him, therefore we have the confidence to part with it." It is the reason of the apostles confidence and willingness to part with the body, that I am to speak of; and the reason is, because

because this body keeps him from his Lord, — whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. The words are a metaphor, and are to be translated thus, *we in dwelling in the body, do dwell not from the Lord*; which our translation renders well, taking little notice of the metaphor, *whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*. Though indeed if they had left out that word, *at home*, it would have been as well, and so have neglected the metaphor altogether, as we may haply hint hereafter. The words are a reason of the apostle's willingness to be dissolved, and do contain a kind of an accusation of the body, and so seem to lay a blame upon it, and upon this animal life; which must be remembred. Now for the former phrase of being at home in the body, it is easily understood, and generally, I think, agreed upon, to be no more than whilst we carry about with us this corruptible flesh, whilst we live this natural animal life. It only signifies man in his compounded animal state, and doth not at all allude to his sinful, unregenerate or carnal state, but the latter phrase, *absent from the Lord*, is capable of a double sense, both good and true; and I think both fit enough to the context and drift of the apostle. I shall speak to both, but insist most upon the latter.

Whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord, i.e. from the bodily presence of the Lord in heaven, absent from Christ Jesus and his glory; and so the words are the same in sense with Cor. xv. 50. *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; for by flesh and blood there must needs be meant man in this animal corruptible state. And so the apostle accuses this kind of life in

in the body; and, as it were, blames it for standing between him and his glorified Lord ; and so consequently between him and the glory of his Lord. And this sense doth well agree with what went before, and with what follows. The apostle hath a great mind to depart; for whilst he is in the body, he is absent from his perfect happiness : for this is the consummation of a christian's happiness to be with the Lord, to be admitted to a beholding of his infinite glory ; as appears by our Saviour's earnest prayer for this, *John xvii. 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.* Besides, if we shall see him as he is, we must also needs be made like unto him, *1 John iii. 2.* else how can we be fit to live for ever in his presence ? Now are we kept from this seeing and beholding the Lord in glory, by this animal life : it stands of between us and the crown, between us and our master's joy, between us and the perfect enjoyment of God. To be with the Lord, is a state of perfect freedom from sin. No unclean thing shall, or can enter into heaven, *Rev. xxi. 27.* A perfect freedom from all manner of afflictions, *Rev. xxi. 4. There shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, and all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes:* a state of freedom from all temptations to sin : for a tempting devil, and all tempting lusts shall be cast out for ever : a state of perfect peace without the least disturbance from within, or from without : of perfect joy, that shall neither have end, or abatement ; and of perfect holiness, when the whole soul shall be enlarged, and raised to know, and love, and enjoy the blessed God as much

as we can, and as we shall be enabled to do.

much as created nature is capable. This is the happy state of seeing God, of being with the Lord: and it is thy corruptible body, this animal life that interposes between us and it, so that the apostle is confident, and rather willing to depart and be with the Lord, than stay here and be without him.

2. Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, without any reference to the world to come, and so it may be fitly translated *distant* from the Lord, estranged from God: this agrees well with the context, and scope of the apostle also. And thus the words are also a good ground of the apostle's resolution and willingness to die, q. d. I am willing to be absent from this body; for whilst I am in it, I find myself to be at a great distance from God. And indeed the word signifies properly *to be at a distance*, or to be *estranged*: So I find it interpreted by a learned critic, without any mystery, (as he speaks of the distance that even believers themselves stand at from God in this life. And in this sense I shall chuse to prosecute the words. In which sense the apostle blames this body and animal life, because it keeps us at a distance from God: is a clog, a snare, a fetter, a pinion to the soul. And so the words agree in sense with those of our Saviour, Matt. xxvi. 41. *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak;* where by the *flesh* must needs be understood the body, if we consider the context, viz. the occasion upon which the words were spoken, the sleepiness of the apostles, or if we consider the propriety of speech according to the stile of the New Testament: true indeed, the corruption of nature is sometimes called *flesh*; but according to that way

of speaking, our Saviour would rather have said, that the spirit was willing, but the flesh was strong ; as he saith elsewhere, that the strong man armed kept the house. Now to explain this doctrine a little; *That even the godly themselves, whilst they are in this body, are at a distance from the Lord.* It must be granted, that the godly soul is nigh unto God, even whilst it sojourns in this mortal body, and tottering flesh. All souls are involved in the apostacy of Adam, and are fallen down from God, have alike straggled from their God, and are sunk into self and the creature. God opened a way for their return by the blood of Jesus : for we owe it unto Christ's death, not only that God is reconciled to us pardoning our sins, but that any of our natures become reconciled to God, by accepting of him as our God, and loving him as the chief good. Now there is a double being brought nigh to God by Christ. The first is more general, external ; and, as I may say, relational ; thus the partition-wall being broken down, the Gentiles that were converted from their idolatry, to a profession of God and Christ, and admitted to a communion with the visible church, are upon that account said to be brethren to the rest of God's children, *1 Cor. v. 11.* and as to the church, they are said to be within it, *verse 12.* though at the same time they were fornicators, covetous, drunkards : And as to God, they are said to be made nigh, *Eph. ii. 13.* A professing of God is said to be a being nigh to him ; and even an external performance is said to be a drawing nigh to him ; and so Nadab and Abihu, even in the offering of strange fire, are said to have drawn nigh to God, *Levit. x. 3.* And this,

this; though it be a privilege, yet it is not that honourable privilege of the truly godly souls, who are by Christ Jesus raised up to God in their hearts, and reconciled to him in their natures, and united to him in their affections; and so are made nigh unto him in a more especial and spiritual manner. Thus all sinful and wicked souls, notwithstanding all their profession and performances, are far from God, estranged from the life of God. Enmity and dissimilitude are the most real distance from God: and truly God-like souls only are nigh unto him; they dwell in him, and he dwelleth in them as in his most proper temple. As to any kind of apposition, no man can draw nigh to God, nor by any local accession; for so all men are alike nigh to him who is every where, and the worst as well as the best of men live and move in him; but they are really nigh unto God, who enjoy him; and they only enjoy him, whose natures are conformable to him in a way of love, goodness, and god-like perfections. We do not enjoy God by any gross and external conjunction with him, but we enjoy him, and are nigh unto him by an internal union; "when a divine spirit informeth and acteth our souls, and derives a divine life into them, and through them." And so a godly soul only is really and happily nigh unto God. Thus the apostle *Paul*, I believe, was as nigh unto God as any man in the world, who did not only live and move in God, as all men do, though few understand it, but God did even live, and, as it were, breathe in him: the very life that he lived was by *faith in the son of God*, Gal. ii. 20.

For, though he walked in the flesh, yet he did not walk *after* the flesh, 2 Cor. x. 3. And yet this gracious soul, even as all other believers, was at a distance from God; and that not so much by reason of his creatureship; for of that he doth not speak, so the very angels of God at an infinite distance from God, but by reason of this mortal body, and animal life, which hindered him from being so nigh to God, as his soul was capable of being--*whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord*, i. e. at a great distance from God.

1. We are distant from God as to that *knowledge* which we shall have of him. Philosophical divines speak of,

1. An essential knowledge of God. This is that unspeakable light whereby the divine nature comprehends its own essence, wherein God seeth himself by science. This man is capable of in this life. But this kind of knowing God by science, is but a low and dry thing, common to good and bad, men and devils; and is indeed the perfection of the *learned* more than of the godly. "And " this kind of knowledge of God, the glorified " soul will reckon but like a fable, or a parable, " when it shall be once swallowed up in God, " feasting upon truth itself, and seeing God in " the pure rays of his own divinity.

2. Or by intuition: this man cannot attain to in this life, in its perfection, because it arises from a blissful union with God himself, which is in this animal state imperfect. This, in the Platonic phrase is, a contact of God, and in scripture language, a beholding of God face to face, which we are not capable of in this animal concrete state.

So

So may the answer of God to Moses be understood, when he besought God to shew him his glory, *Exod. xxxiii. 18.* i. e. to imprint a distinct idea of his divine essence upon his mind; ver. 20. *No man can see me and live;* i. e. no man in this corruptible state and animal life is capable of seeing me as I am, to apprehend my divine essence, to see my face. The vision of God is not in this life, but in the other; so that a man must die before he can thus know God. This is the exposition of Jewish doctors, and our learned countrymen approve it also. This blessed knowledge of God we are at a distance from, whilst we are in this body: so says the apostle plainly, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* *Now we see through a glass darkly,* but the time will come when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. Now our body principally hinders the operation of our minds, when they do exercise themselves about the nature of God, whilst it presents its fancies, and gross imaginations to the soul; so it becomes as it were a veil upon the face of the soul, draws a cloud, and casts a mist over its eyes, that it cannot discern distinctly, nor judge properly and spiritually. And with allusion to this, that passage of the apostle is proper and significant; we see "*as through a glass,*" which glass is indeed continually sullied and darkened whilst we look into it, by the breathing of but animal fancies and imaginations upon it. Not only those stinking fogs of pride and self-love, and other sinful corruptions that do arise out of the soul itself, do hinder our right perceptions of God, as the earth sends out vapours out of itself which arise and interpose between

between itself and the sun, but even the animal fancy casts in its phantasms and imaginations as a mist before the eye of the soul, which through divine grace hath been somewhat enlightened, and cleared from its inbred sinful humours. Though corruption in the mind be as a rheume in its eye, so that it cannot well see ; yet that doth not hinder, but that the fancy by presenting its unspiritual imaginations, doth also cast a mist before it, that it cannot see well, nor judge rightly ; and so it is either held in gross ignorance, or lapses into error. But in the regeneration this sense either shall not be, or shall be pure and spiritual.

2. Whilst we are in the body, we are distant from God, as to that *service* which we ought to perform to him in the world. And herein it were endless to run through all those outward duties which we owe unto God in the body ; and to shew how the body becomes a hindrance either to them, or in them. Though the soul be made willing and forward, by a divine principle implanted in it, yet the body remains a body, a weak and sluggish instrument ; and so it will be whilst it is animal ; it will go down into the dust a *weak* body, *1 Cor. xv. 43.* What man ever had a more willing and cheerful heart than *Moses* the friend of God ? Yet his hands were *heavy*, and ready to hang down, *Exad. xvii. 12.* Shall I instance in the excellent duty of preaching and hearing ? Wherein the spirits of the most spiritual preacher are soon exhausted ; the tongue of the learned is ready to cleave to the roof of his mouth ; the head is seized with dizziness ; the heart with pantings ; the organs of speech with weariness ; and the knees

knees with trembling ; and the ears of the most devout hearers with heaviness ; the eyes with sleepiness ; and the whole body in a short time with weakness. Shall I instance in the noble duty of prayer ? Wherein the pious soul goes out to God, but can scarce get its body to accompany it ; and there the fancy distracts, the senses divert ; and indeed all the members are ready to play the truants, if not the traitors too : especially the brain, where the soul sits enthroned, is suddenly environed with a rude rout of sluggish vapours arising from the stomach, and being no longer able to defend itself against them, falls down dead in the midst of them : insomuch that the poor soul is ready to wish sometimes with the sorrowful prophet, *O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place, that I might leave my members, and go from them, for they are all an assembly of treacherous servants :* or wish that it were like its Saviour, who could leaye his raw disciples asleep, and go and pray apart, and come again unto them. Shall I instance in that high duty of sustaining martyrdom, bearing persecutions for God ? Come on my body, cries the holy soul, come on to the stake ; come my head, lay down thyself upon this block ; come my body, compose thyself in this dark dungeon ; come my feet, fit yourselves into these stocks ; come my hands, draw on these fetters, these iron bracelets ; come, come drink the cup that my father gives thee. But O how it follows to the stake ! what shaking, shivering, trembling, and reluctancy may you see in the whole structure of it ! the head hangs down, the eyes run over, the lips quaver, the shoulders pull back, the hands tremble

tremble, the knees knock together, and the whole fabric is ready to tumble down, for fear of falling. Either to this, as some interpret, or to that duty of prayer, as others, doth that of our Saviour refer, *Mark xiv 38. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* It seems the spirit of the weakest christian is strong, though the body, as we have seen, of the strongest saint is weak : though indeed it is not properly the weakness that is in the body, that I am to speak to, but the influence that the body hath upon the soul to weaken that : for whilst the soul sympathizes with the body, attends to it, spares it, pities it, itself becomes almost ill affected to the service of God. I am not so much blaming the body, because it had need by reason of its slothfulness to be drawn on to duty ; but because by its influences, it draws on the soul also from them : for so we find it by woful experience, that if the body sleep, the soul cannot wake ; it cannot hear without the ear, nor see without the eyes ; so that the body's weariness at length ends in the soul's unwillingness ; and the weakness of the one, grows to be the sin of the other.

3. Whilst we are in the body we are at a distance from God, as to *communion* with him : we are estranged from fellowship with him ; and this is indeed to be absent from the Lord. Oh how many weary and uncomfortable days do poor Saints live at a great distance from their God, their Life, their happiness, whilst they are in their worldly pilgrimage, in their cage of flesh ! Oh how many days do they forget God, and are apt to think that God hath forgotten them too ! How do

do they live sometimes, as it were, without  
in the world, their souls being surfeited with  
natural pleasures, benumbed with fears, frozen  
with self love, choaked with cares, stifled with  
griefs, and seem to have no more feeling of God than  
than a body in the dust hath of the soul its life;  
what a heavy yoke doth the poor soul draw  
when it plows and harrows to the flesh, a  
yoke which it cannot lift up its head to Heaven ! Oh how  
intercourse with God obstructed, our beholding  
him obscured, our entertaining of him pre-  
venting our enjoyment of him disturbed and violated.  
Love to him deadened, and his love to us dimmed;  
ours rendered infirm, and his rendered in-  
firm; and all by this make-bate *mortal flesh* ! A  
series of uncertainties, and vicissitudes, what chang-  
ings, toffings, turnings and windings are our  
grim souls here exercised with ! What blos-  
soms and piecings, reconciliations and fallings,  
closings and partings, risings and fallings;  
and downings; what forwards and backwards  
does the poor distressed soul experience in this  
state ! The flourishing soul withers ; the  
languishes ; the vigorous soul fainteth ; the  
soul flaggeth ; the devout soul swooneth ; the  
soul sickeneth, and is ready to give up the ghost;  
and she that was a while ago resting an-  
d sleeping in the arms of her Lord, anon lies ex-  
tinguished upon the dung-hill, and hath almost forgotten that  
she was happy; her peace is violated, her re-  
st broken; her converse with Heaven inter-  
rupted; her incomes from God are few and insensib-  
le; her goings to him are few and lazy, and  
her divine pleasures are almost dried up.

this, while she lis in this body : and indeed a great part of it by reason of this body in which she is : The animal body keeps us distant from the Lord, that we cannot converse with him, mind him, enjoy him, live upon him, and unto him. The body being fitted only for this animal state, is ever drawing down the foul, when it would rafe up it self in contemplation of, and communion with the blessed God. And so,

i. The *Necessities* of the body do hinder the souls communion with the Lord. Not that the necessities of the body are simply in themselves to be blamed, but the caring for these doth so exercise the soul in this state, that it cannot attend upon God without distraction. Oh how much doth the necessary caring for meat and drink, food and physic ; yea, the ordering of temporal affairs, estrange from communion and converse with God ! so that the soul, like poor *Martha*, is cumbered with many cares, and busied with *much serving* in this house, and cannot attend so devoutly and entirely as it ought upon the Lord. If the body be pinched with pain, the soul cannot be at rest, but must needs look out for relief: if the body be pinched with hunger and thirst, the soul can take no rest, till it hath found out a supply for it. If the one be sick, the other is sad ; if the one be hungry or thirsty, the other seems to languish ; like *Hippocrates's* twins that laughed and cried, lived and died together.

It is a wonderful mystery, and a rare secret, how the soul comes to sympathize with the body, and to have not only a knowledge, but, as it were, a feeling of its necessities ; how these come to be conveyed

conveyed to the soul, and how it comes to be thus affected with them. But we find it so : and, indeed to speak truth, it seems necessary for the maintaining of this animal state, that it should be so, that the soul should be, as it were, hungry, weary, sick, and sleepy together with the body : " for if our soul should not know what it is to be " hungry, thirsty, cold, or sick, or weary, but by " a bare ratiocination, or a dry syllogistical inference, without any more especial feeling of " these necessities, it would soon suffer the body " to languish and decay, and commit it wholly " to all changes and casualties : neither would " our own body be any more to us, than the " body of a plant, or of a star, which we do " many times view with as much clearness, and " contemplate with as much contentment, as we " do our own." But in the mean time, the soul is diverted from its main employment, turned aside from its communion with God: not so much by providing somewhat for our bodies to eat, and drink, and put on, which is lawful and needful, as our Saviour implies, *Mat. vi. 32.* as by sinking itself into the body, being passionately and inordinately affected with its wants, and so being sinfully thoughtful, as our Saviour intimateth in the same chapter, *verse 31.*

2. The *Passions* of the body do hinder the souls communion with the Lord. So powerful is the interest and influence that this body hath in and over the soul, that it fills it with desires, pleasures, griefs, joys, fears, angers, and sundry passions. The body calls out the soul to attend upon its several passions, which I dare not say are sinful in themselves,

themselves, as they first affect our souls, any more than it is our sin that we are men: our blessed Saviour, seems not to have been free from them, as grief, *Isa.* liii. 3. fear, *Heb.* v. 7. who yet was free from all sin, *1 Pet.* ii. 22. Nay, it seems necessary (as I said before) considering the nature of this animal life, that the soul should have the corporeal passions and impressions feelingly and powerfully conveyed to it, without which, it could not express a due benevolence to the body that belongs to it: and indeed, were it not so, we could not properly be said (in the Apostle's phrase here) to be at home in the body: the soul would rather dwell *in domo aliena quam sua*. But the soul being called out to attend upon these passions, is easily ensnared by them: for it can hardly exercise itself about them, but it slips insensibly into a sinful inordinacy. As for example:

“ The animal spirits nimbly playing in the brain,  
 “ and swiftly flying from thence thorough the  
 “ nerves, up and down the whole body, do raise  
 “ the fancy with mirth and chearfulness, which  
 “ we must not presently mistake for the power of  
 “ grace, nor condemn for the working of cor-  
 “ ruption: so also when the gall empties its  
 “ bitter juice into the liver, and that minglest  
 “ itself with the blood there, it begets fiery  
 “ spirits, which presently fly up into the brain,  
 “ and cause impressions of anger.” Now though I dare not say, that the soul's first sensating and entertaining of these passions is sinful, yet, it is sadly evident that our souls being once moved by these undisciplin'd animal spirits, are very apt to sit upon, and cherish those passions of grief, fear, mirth, anger, and; as it were, to work

work them into itself, in an inordinate manner, and contrary to the dictates of reason, and so the will presently makes those sinful, which before were but merely human, or as one calls them, the meer blossomings or shootings forth of animal life within us. We see then in these particulars, that not only the depraved dispositions of the soul do keep us at a distance from God, but even this body also, is a great hinderance to that knowledge of God, which we shall attain to, that service of God, which we might perform, and that sweet communion with him, which we shall enjoy. It is a clog to the soul that would run ; a mist to the soul that would see clearly ; a manacle to the soul that would work ; a snare to the soul that would be free ; a fetter to chain it to earthly and material things ; and, as it were, a pinion to the wings of contemplation : more particularly, it is a hinderance to it, as to those three things which I have named : As to the soul's knowledge of God, the body is an occasion of ignorance and error : as to its serving of God, an occasion of distraction and weariness ; lightness and triflingnes ; and as to its communion with God, an occasion of earthliness and sensuality. Now this distance, which this body keeps the soul at from God, might more particularly appear in another way of explication, by observing the especial grievances, that do arise to the soul from those three great animal faculties, (if I may so speak) the Senses, the Appetite, the Fancy.

1. The *Senses*, I mean the external senses of the body ; seeing, hearing, &c. These convey passions

passions to the soul, upon which it insists and feeds with a sinful fondness and eagerness. Set open the eye, and it will set hard to convey some species to the soul, of earthly objects, that shall jostle the ideas of God out of it. Set open the ear, and it will fill the soul with such a noise and earthly tumult, that the secret whispers of the divine spirit cannot be heard. The like I may say of the rest : Oh, how easily do these discompose the fixed soul, distract the devout soul, cast a mist before the contemplative soul, and hale down the raised soul from communion with heaven to converse with earthly objects ! *Ut vidi, ut perii !* is the complaint of many a Christian, as well as it was of the heathen. The souls of most men are quite sunk into their senses, and do nothing but, as it were lacquey to them all their lives, and so the servants are on horseback, and princes go on foot. Though the eye will never be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing ; yet forsooth, these important suitors must be gratified : the eye must see what it will see, and the ear must hear what it will hear : nothing must be withheld from them, that these childish senses do whine after. These mens souls are indeed incarnate, swallowed up in their eyes, ears, and mouths. But not only these, but even godly souls are often charmed and ensnared by their senses ; even they converse not only *in* the body, but too much *with* it also ; and it becomes as a *Delilah*, to lull them asleep, and bind them too. Good *Job* found his senses so treacherous, that he was fain to make a covenant with them, *Job xxxi. 1.* And well if he could escape so too. The words are a metaphor ; for indeed

indeed the worst of it is, that these senses are not capable of any discipline ; one cannot bring them into any covenant terms : so that whilst we have senses, they will be treacherous ; whilst our eyes are in our heads, they will be wandering after forbidden objects.

2. The *Appetite*, the sensitive appetite, which is a faculty of the sensitive soul, whereby this animal man is stirred up to desire and lust after the things which his senses have dictated to him. This bodily lust following upon the neck of the former, becomes a greater snare to the soul : This restless suitor comes whining ever and anon to the soul for every trifle that the eye hath seen, or the ear heard, or the mouth hath tasted ; and by its continual coming, and importunate crying wearies her into an observance of it : as the fond child comes crying to the mother for every knack and gewgaw that it hath seen upon the stalls, and she, though she cannot in judgment approve of the request, yet either in fond indulgence, or for peace sake, will condescend to purchase it. This is the daughter of the Horseleech, that cries continually, *Give, Give* : why, what would it have ? Even any thing that it hath seen, or heard, or touched, or tasted ; any thing that it sees a fellow creature to be possest of : and so indeed the Appetite doth not only ensnare the soul into drunkenness and gluttony, but voluptuoufness, lasciviousnes, and all manner of sensuality. The evil of the sensual appetite appears in wantonness and lasciviousnes (whether real, verbal, or mental) in immoderate and inordinate trading, ingroffing, sporting, building, attiring, sleeping, visiting, as well

well as in eating and drinking. I will determine nothing concerning the first motions of the appetite, whereby it sollicits the will to fulfil it; only this, that if it sollicit to any thing simply and morally evil, it is sinful in that first act; and that at all times it ought carefully to be watched, lest it seduce to intemperance in things lawful. But concerning the gratifying of the appetite, seeing there must be in us a sensitive appetite, whilst we, are in this animal state, it is to be endeavoured as far as may be, that we gratify the appetite, not as it is a sensitive appetite, but under this notion, as the thing that it desires, makes for our real good, and tends to the enjoyment of the supreme good: to eat and drink, not because we are hungry or thirsty, because the appetite desires it; but with reference to the main end, with respect to the highest good, that the body may be enabled, strengthened, and quickned to wait upon the soul chearfully in the actions of a holy life. But this man, in his animal state cannot perfectly attain to, which shews that the appetite doth keep us at a distance from God.

3. The *Fancy*; this also keeps a man at a distance from God, and hinders us in the knowledge and service of God, and interrupts the soul's communion with God. This is a busy and peccant faculty, or inward sense, and the soul doth readily sensate the passions of it, so that it doth frequently hinder its mental operations, and becomes a great snare. A working fancy (how much soever it is magnified by the wisdom of this world) is a mighty snare to the soul, except it work in a fellowship with right reason, and a sanctified

sanctified heart: I am persuaded there is no greater burden in the world to a serious soul; especially in hot and dry constitutions, where it is commonly most pregnant, and most impatient of discipline. And, I confess, I have often wondered at the soul's readiness to be so speedily affected with the phantasms and imaginations of it, and fondness to hug them so dearly. This indeed, if it be so far refined, as to present sober and solid imaginations to the mind, and to act in subservience to sanctified reason, is an excellent handmaid to the soul in many of her functions: but otherwise is a snare; as we have partly observed already, and may observe more, if we study the secrets of our own souls, and the mighty mysteries that are within us. And this doth not only ordinarily disturb, distract and hinder in ordinary duties, but even when the soul is at the highest pitch of communion and contemplation, it assays to pull it down to attend to its vain phantasms; and indeed gives it many a grievous fall. I doubt not to affirm, that this is the most pernicious enemy of the three that I named to the soul's happiness, as might appear in many respects; I will only name one: it hath an advantage against us, which neither of the other two hath: it infests us, and annoys us sleeping as well as waking. In sleep, the senses are locked up, and the appetite is, for the most part, silent from its begging; but then the fancy is as busy and tumultuous as ever, forming and gathering imaginations, and those are commonly wild and senseless; if not worse. The mind, in way of kindness and benevolence to the body, suspends its own actings, whilst the

body takes its rest in the night, and then the rude fancy takes its opportunity to wander at liberty, as being without its keeper, and acts to the disturbance of the body ; but that is not the worst, for it becomes so tumultuous and impetuous sometimes, as that it awakens the mind to attend upon its imaginations ; and this the soul doth condescend to in an inordinate manner, and sets the stamp of sinfulness upon them, to its own wounding. And now that I am speaking of sleep as a *Mantissa* to this discourse, I cannot but observe how this very thing also keeps us at a distance from God, in this animal state. How is our communion with God interrupted by this ? For herein we cease, not only from the actions of an animal life, but commonly from the actions of a spiritual life too. What a great breach, what a sad intercision is there made in our converse with God by this means ! such a poor happiness it is, that we have in this world, that it is cut off, and seems as it were, not to be one fourth part of our time : for indeed a happiness that is not felt, deserves not the name of happiness. Some learned and active men have been ashamed that they have slept away so much of their time, which was all too little for their studies and exploits. Ah ! poor Christian ! that, as it were, sleeps away so much of his God ; being as much estranged from him in the night, as though he had never conversed with him in the day ; and in the morning, when he awakes, cannot always find himself with him neither : which is enough to make a poor saint wish, either that he might have no need of sleep, or that, with the

amorous

amorous spouse, *Cant. v. 2.* *Though he sleep, his heart might wake perpetually.*

We have seen in what sense this mortal body keeps believers absent from the Lord, and in what respects it keeps them at a distance from God, even in this life, from the *knowledge* of God, the *service* of God, and *communion* with him. Here then, by way of application,

1. We may see that it was for good reason that the blessed apostle was confident and willing to depart ; nay, he groans within himself, desiring that *mortality might be swallowed up of life*, as he speaks, verse 4. I told you before, that these words did contain the reason or ground thereof ; and by this time I hope you see that the reason is good, and the ground is sufficient. What will the men of this world say ? Will you persuade us out of our life ? Should any thing in the world make a man weary of his life ? *Præstat miserum esse quam non esse.* The apostle was sure besides himself, or he would never have fallen out with his own life ; or else he was in a passion, and knew not what he said ; or else his life was bitter to him, by reason of the poor, afflicted, persecuted condition that he lived in, and so was become desperate, and cared not what became of him. No, none of these ; the apostle was in his right wits, and in a sober mind too. It was not a passion, or a fit of melancholy, but his judgment and choice, upon good deliberation ; and therefore you find him in the same mind elsewhere, *Phil. i. 23.* *I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.* Besides, he gives a reason for what he desires : now we know that passion is unruly and unreasonable.

sonable. Neither was the apostle besides himself; for he gives a good, solid, and wise reason---*Whilst we are at home in the body, &c.* He will part with his life rather than not be perfectly happy. For, whereas, worldlings put such a high price upon life, and think that nothing should persuade men out of their lives; it is true indeed, if we speak properly, life is the perfection of the creature; the happiness of every thing is its life; *A living dog is better than a dead lion,* Eccles. ix. 4. But I may say to these, even as our Saviour said to that woman, in *John* iv. 18. concerning her husband, the life that we live here is not our life. The union of the sensitive soul with the body is indeed truly and properly the life of a beast, and its greatest happiness, for it is capable of no higher perfection; but the union of the rational soul with God is the noblest perfection of man, and his highest life: so that the life of a believing soul is not destroyed at death, but perfected. Neither was the apostle weary of his life, because of the adversities of it. The apostle was of a braver spirit sure than any Stoic; he durst live, though he rather desired to die. All the conflicts he endured with the world never wrung such a sigh from him, as the conflict he had with his own corruptions did, *Rom.* vii. 24. *O wretched man, &c.* All the persecutions in the world never made him groan so much as the burden of his flesh doth here, and his great distance from the Lord. A godly soul can converse with persecuting men, and a tempting devil can handle briars and thorns, can grapple with any kind of oppressions and adversities in the flesh without despondency, so long as it finds itself in the bosom

of God, and in the arms of Omnipotence. But when it begins to consider where it is, how far it is from its God, its life, and the happy state that God hath prepared it for, then it cannot but groan within itself, and be ready with *Peter*, to cast itself out of the ship ; to get to its God, to land itself in eternity. Neither indeed (to speak truly) is it only the sense of sin against God, which sets the godly soul a going ; for though it must be confess, that this is a heavy burden upon the soul, yet the apostle makes no complaint of this here, but only of his distance from God, that necessary distance from God that the body kept him at.

2. See here the excellent spirit of true religion. Godly souls do groan after an unbodied state, not only because of their sins in the body, but even because of the necessary distance at which the body keeps them from God. We may suppose a godly soul, at some time, to have no manner of affliction in the world to grieve him ; no sin unpardoned, unrepented of to trouble him ; yet for all this he is not at perfect rest : he is burdened, and groans within himself, because he is at such a distance from that absolute good, whom he longs to know more familiarly, and enjoy more fully than he doth yet, or than is allowed to mortal men. And though nothing else ail him, yet the consideration of this distance makes him cry out, *Ob when shall I come and appear before God ?* be wholly swallowed up in him, see him as he is, and converse with him face to face. Bare innocency, or freedom from sin, cannot satisfy that noble and large spirit that is in a truly and God-like soul ; but that spirit of true goodness (being nothing else but

but an efflux from God himself) carries the soul out after a more intimate union with that being from whence it came. God, dwelling in the soul, doth, by a secret, mighty power, draw the soul more and more to himself. In a word, a godly soul, that is really touched with the sense of divine sweetness and fullness, and impressed with divine goodness and holiness, as the wax is with the stamp of the seal, could not be content to dwell for ever in this kind of animal body, nor take up an eternal rest in this imperfect mixed state, though it could converse with the world without a sinful sullyng of itself, but must needs endeavour still a closer conjunction with God; and, leaving the chace of all other objects, pant and breathe, not only after God alone, but after more and more of him; and not only when it is under the sense of sin, but most of all when it is under the most powerful influences of divine grace and love, cry out with *Paul*, Oh, who will deliver me out of this body!

3. Suffer me, from hence, to expostulate a little; to expostulate with Christian souls about their unseemly temper. Doth this animal life, and mortal body, keep us at such a distance from our God, our happiness? Why are we then so fond of this life and mixed state? Why do we so pamper this body? Why so anxiously studious to keep it up, so dreadfully afraid of the ruins of it? If we take the apostle's words in the first sense that I named, then I may ask with him in the first verse, *Know we not, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?* or ver. 8. Why are we not willing rather to be  
*absent*

*absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord?*  
 If we take them in the latter sense, as this animal body is an hindrance to the soul's knowledge of, and communion with God; then I ask concerning this, as the apostle doth concerning rich men, *James ii. 6.* Why do ye pamper, prize, honour, dote upon this body? Doth not this body oppress you, distract you, burden you, clog you, hinder you? Doth not this body interpose between the *Sun of Righteousness*, between the *Father of Lights*, and your souls that should shine with a light and glory borrowed from him; even as the dark body of the earth interposes between the sun and moon, to eclipse its light? Why are we not rather weary that we are in the body? Surely there are some objections, some impediments to the soul's longing after its happy state, which I shall come to anon; but I doubt also that there is something that chains the soul to this animal life; some cords to this earthly tabernacle that tie up the soul in it: but I cannot well imagine what they should be. Say not, There is something of God to be enjoyed in this life, which makes it pleasant; for, although this be true, yet I am sure God gives nothing of himself to a soul, thereby to clog it or cloy it. Did Moses send for some clusters of the land of Canaan into the wilderness, think ye, that the people might see and taste the fruits, and sit still, and be satisfied, and say, Oh it is enough; we see that there are pleasant things in that land, we will never come at it? Or, did he not do it rather that they might make the more haste to possess themselves of it? Will any man say, Away, I will have no more land, no more money,

money, I have some already? Can a godly soul say, God hath given me an earnest, I desire no more? No, no; but the report that a Christian hears of a rest remaining, a happy life remaining for it, and the chariots of divine graces that he sees God hath sent out into his soul to convey it thither, make him cry out, not with *Jacob*, Gen. xlvi. 28. *It is not enough Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die.* But Oh this is not enough; this report is not enough; it is not enough that I taste some of the good things of the land; it is not enough that I see these carriages sent out for me; it is not enough that my soul hath an happy and honourable life prepared for it; I see it indeed before I die, but I will also die, that I may see it better, and enjoy it more. But I doubt there is some earthly tie, even upon the heavenly soul that chains it to this present animal body; but sure I am, that whatsoever it is, it is but a weak one. Is there any worldly accommodation, any creature-toy, that should in reason step between a soul and its God? Is this life sweet, because there are creature-comforts to be enjoyed? And will it not be a better life, when creature-comforts shall not be needed? And are the pleasures of this body, the comforts of this life, the flattering smiles, or fawning embraces of the creature, such a mighty contentment to a soul, to a soul acquainted with the highest good? Hast thou, O my soul, any such full and satisfying entertainment in thy pilgrimage, as to make thee loth to go home? Wilt thou hide thyself with *Saul* among the *stuff*, among the lumber of the world, when thou art sought for to be crowned?

Are

**A**re the empty sounds of popular applause, the breaking bubbles of secular greatness, the shallow strains of sensual pleasures, the smiling dalliance, and lisping eloquence of wives and children, the flying shadows of creature-refreshments, the momentary flourishes of worldly beauty and bravery; are these meat for a soul? Are these the proper object, or the main happiness of such a divine thing as an immortal soul? Why are we not rather weary of this body, that makes us so weary of heavenly employment? Why do we not rather long to part with that life that parts us from our life? And instead of the young apostles, *It is good to be here*, cry out with the sweet Singer, *Oh that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly away and be at rest!*

And now methinks, by this time, I might be somewhat bold, and form my remaining discourse into an exhortation. But it may be, you will not bear it all at once; therefore I will first begin with a dehortation, to dissuade from two evils concerning your body, viz. *Fear* and *Fondness*.

i. Take heed of *Fear* for the body. I speak, not so much of those first impressions which our fancies and animal spirits do make upon our minds (though it were to be wished that the mind did not so much as once sensate or entertain these) but of those acts of the will, whereby it doth receive, allow, cherish these impressions, until the cockatrice egg be hatched into a viper. I speak not against care and circumspection; no, nor against that kind of suspicion, whereby wise and prudent persons are jealous of circumstances and events, and so do watch to prevent, remove, or manage

manage bodily evils, which is called Fear; though even in these there may be an extreme, a *fear where no fear is*, Psal. liii. 5. which is there ascribed to the wicked, and elsewhere threatened as a judgment, Lev. xxvi. 36. *The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them*, Deut. xxviii. 65. *The Lord shall give thee a trembling heart*. There is a *prudent man who foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself*, Prov. xxii. 3. But there are also many fools that hide themselves, though they see no evil. But I am not speaking of these; there is a vast difference between *Care* and *Fear*. By *Fear*, I mean that trembling, fluctuating, tormenting passion, that doth not suffer the heart to be at rest, but doth, as it were, unhinge it, and loosen the joints of the soul, whether it break out into expressions or no. It clouds the understanding, unsettles the will, disordereth the affections, confounds the memory, and is like an earthquake in the soul, taking it off from its own basis, destroying the consistency of it, and hurling all the faculties into confusion. This, whether it break out into any unseemly acts or no, (which commonly it doth) is itself an unseemly temper for a wise man; much more for a godly. I might speak as a philosopher, and shew how unbecoming a man, and how destructive to him this passion is; so much, that whilst it doth predominate, it almost robs him of that which is his greatest glory, even reason itself. But, to say no worse of it, it is very opposite, if not contrary to that noble grace of faith, whereby the steady soul resteth and lodgeth in the arms of God, as in its centre. But to speak to the thing in hand; what an unseemly passion is this! We would

would have the world to believe that we have laid up our happiness in God, and that we are troubled that we are so far from him ; and yet we are afraid lest that should be taken out of the way that keeps us at a distance from him : we flatter ourselves that we are in haste for heaven, and yet we are dreadfully afraid lest our rubs should be taken out of the way. How do these things hang together ? Are we persuaded, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were taken down, we have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ? If not, why do we yet call ourselves Christians ? But I think I may take it for granted we are all so persuaded ; and if so, why are we so afraid it should be taken down ? I am loth to speak what I think ; yet methinks the entire and ardent love which we either do bear, or ought to bear to the blessed God, and union and communion with him, should cast out this fear. This is suitable to scripture, *1 John* iv. 8. I will not dispute how far sinful fear for the body may carry a godly soul ; the further, the worse, I am sure : but if any will needs be so indulgent to his own passions, and so much an enemy to his own peace, as to encourage himself to fear (which is a strange thing) from the example of *Abraham*, denying his wife ; or *Peter*, denying his Lord ; let him compare the issue, and then let me see whether he dare go and do likewise : but if that will not fright you from fear, chew upon these two considerations.

I. I pray you seriously dispute the matter with yourselves, how far fear of sickness and death may consist with that ardent thirst after union and

and perfect communion with the blessed God, with which we ought to be possest.

2. Dispute seriously how far it can stand with the sincerity of a christian. God hath not left us in the dark, as to this matter. I will turn you to a text or two, which methinks, should strike cold to all slavish trembling professors, *Prou. xxviii. 1. Job xv. 20 21. The wicked travelleth with pain all his days, a dreadful sound is in his ears: They are the words of Eliphaz* indeed, but they agree with the words of God himself, *Iса. xxxiii. 14. The sinners in Sion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites:* when I read over these texts, I cannot but pray, and cry, O my soul, come not you into the number of the wicked, and be not united into the assembly of hypocrites!

2. Take heed of *fondness* of the body: of a double act of it, *priding, pampering*.

1. Take heed you pride not your selves in any excellencies of the body. Doth this mortal body keep us at a distance from our God? Do we well then to love that which keeps us from that which is most lovely? Why do we stand fondly gazing upon that which keeps us from the blessed flight of God? If you ask me, did ever any man hate his own flesh? I will ask you again, did ever any wise man love his own flesh above him that made it? Did ever any godly soul love his body in opposition to his God? Oh, but it is a comely body! and what is a beautiful body, but a fair prison? A silver twist, or a clog of gold, can as really hinder the flight of a bird, and fore-stal her liberty, as a stone tied at her heels.

Nay,

Nay, those very excellencies which you so much admire, are so much the greater hindrances. If we had learned that excellent lesson indeed, of enjoying all things only in God, then the several beauties and braveries of the body would be a help to our devotion; they would carry us up to an admiration and contemplation of that glorious and most excellent being, from whom they were communicated: so we might (in some sense) look into a glas, and behold the beauty of God. But alas! these commonly prove the greater snares: many had been more beautiful within, had they been less beautiful without; more chaste, if less comely; many had been more peaceable, and more at peace too, if they had been less able to have quarrelled and fought. It was said of *Galba*, who was an ingenious man, but deformed, that his soul dwelt ill; but sure I am it might better have been so said of beautiful *Abdalom*, or *Jezebel*, whose bodies became a snare to their souls. On the other hand, they that want a beauty in their bodies, will perhaps labour to find an excellency in their minds far beyond it; as the philosopher advised to look often into a glas, *ut si deformis sis, corrigas formositate morum, &c.*

2. Take heed of pampering the body, of treating it too gently and delicately. Deny it nothing that may fit it for the service of God and your souls, and allow it no more than may do that. Thy pampering is, 1. *Unseemly*: What, make a darling of that which keeps us from the Lord! Carry it gently, and delicately, and tenderly towards that, which, whilst we carry about with us, we cannot be happy! 2. *Injurious*: If you bring up this

*servant* delicately from a child, you shall have him become your *son* at length ; yea, your master. If you do by your bodies, as the fond king did by his son *Adonijah*, 1 Kings i. 6. never displease it, never reprove it, never deny it, it will do with you in time as he did, raise seditions in your soul. Go on and please, and pamper, and cocker your bodies, and it will come to this at length, that you must deny them nothing ; you must give whatsoever a whining appetite will crave, go whether your gadding senses will carry you, and speak whatsoever wanton fancy will suggest. Doth not the body itself set us at a sufficient distance from God ? But we must estrange ourselves more from him by pleasuring it, spend the time that should be for God, in decking, trimming, adorning it ! When you cram this, you feed a bird that will pick out your eyes ; you nourish a traitor, when you gratify this *Adonijah*. In a word, is it not enough that we all carry fire in our bosoms, but we must also blow it up into a flame ? Nay, *my bretbren, do not so foolishly.*

And now, methinks, by this time, I may venture upon an exhortation, by degrees at least.

1. *Watch against the body.* You have heard how the senses, appetite, and fancy become a snare to the soul's living unto, and conversing with God : now then, if you seriously design communion with heaven, if you place your happiness in the knowledge and enjoyment of that Supreme and Eternal Good, it becomes you to watch against all things that may distract or divert you from it, or make you fall short of the glory of God. Men that live upon earthly designs, whose great ambition

ambition is to be great in the world, do not only use the most effectual means, and take the most direct courses to accomplish those designs, and attain those ends, but do continually suspect, and diligently watch against all the moths that would corrupt, the rust that would consume, the thieves that would plunder their treasures; and, in a word, against all possible hindrances, defraudations, and disappointments: so will we suspect and watch sure against all enemies and traitors to our souls, if we live here upon eternal designs, if our ambition be to be great in God alone. And the more eminent the danger is, the more will we watch. Have you not found, by experience, which of these three have been most prejudicial to your communion with God? If not, you have not been so studious to know the state, nor pursue the happiness of your own souls as you might: if so, then watch against that most of all which you have found to be most injurious. For it ordinarily comes to pass, either by the difference of constitutions, or difference of temptations, or different ways of living, or some other thing, that God's children are more ensnared by some one of these than other. Well, be sure to watch and pray, and strive more especially against the more especial enemies of your souls.

2. *Live above the body*; above bodily enjoyments, ornaments, excellencies. Though these bodily enjoyments be never so sweet, these bodily ornaments never so glorious, yet is not your happiness in these. Certainly they live to their loss, who live upon the excellencies of their own souls, whether natural or supernatural, they deprive

themselves of the infinite glory, fulness, and sufficiency that is in the blessed God, who take up their happiness in these: much more do they pinch and impoverish their own souls, who live upon bodily ornaments or excellencies, wherein many inferior creatures do excel them; the rose in beauty, the sun in brightness, the lion in strength, the stag in swiftness, &c. If a woman was as lovely as the morning, *fair as the moon, clear as the sun*; if a man was full of personal grace and majesty, *terrible as an army with banners*, yet were not their happiness in these accomplishments. Nay, which is worse, these ornaments stand between us and our happiness. When you begin therefore at any time fondly to admire any of these bodily excellencies, then think with yourselves, Oh, but all these do not make my soul happy! Nay, this beautiful outside must stink, and be deformed; these fair and flourishing members must wither in the dust; this active, strong, and graceful body must be buried in disgrace and weakness, before I can attain to entire and perfect happiness. This consideration will advance us to live above the body.

3. *Be content to be unbodied for a time.* Is it true, that we can no otherwise be happy, no otherways be present with God, know him familiarly, enjoy him perfectly and entirely? Cannot we get to him, except we go through the dust? Be it so then; be content to be unbodied for a time. *Occidat modò imperet*, could the Heathen say concerning her son; much rather may a Christian say, concerning his Father, Let him slay me, so my soul may but reign with him, which is by his reigning

reigning in it; let him kill me, so he will, but kill me; let him draw me through the dust of the earth, so he will but draw me out of this dust of the world, so he will but draw me nigh unto himself, and bring me into a full and inseparable conjunction with my Lord! Methinks I need not use many arguments to persuade a soul that is feinely overpowered, mastered, ravished with the infinite beauty, goodness, glory, and fulness of his God, to be willing to quit a dusty tabernacle for a time, wherein he is almost swallowed up, to depart, and to be entirely swallowed up in him. Nay, suppose a Christian in the lowest form, who hath but chosen God for his highest good and only happiness, (as every sincere Christian hath) methinks he should have learnt this lesson, to comply with that infinite, perfect will, that governs both him and the whole world. I cannot conceive a godly soul, without the subduing of self-will; nor suppose a sincere saint void at least of the habit of self-resignation. Therefore I will add no more concerning this, but rise a step higher.

4. *Long after an unbodied state,* desire to depart, and to be with the Lord; groan within yourselves to have mortality swallowed up of life, in which temper you find the holy apostle. To be content to die, is a good temper; a temper scarce to be found I think, in any wicked man; not from a right principle, I am sure: but, methinks, it is no very great thing in comparison of what we should labour to attain to. Think on it a little, what a strange kind of cold, uncouth phrase it is, Such a man is content to be happy! Men are not said to be content to be rich, but covetous; not

willing to be honoured, but *ambitious*: and why should it only be content to be with God? I am persuaded there is no shew or semblance of satisfactory bliss and happiness for a soul, a noble immortal nature, but only in the supreme, essential, perfect, absolute good, the blessed and eternal good; and should not this noble, active being, be carried out with vehement longings after its proper and full happiness, as well as this earthly, sluggish body, is carried with restless appetite after health, and safety, and liberty? Why should a soul alone be content not to be happy, when all other things in the world do so ardently court, and vehemently pursue their respective ends and several perfections? Certainly if the blessed and glorious God should display himself in all his beauty, and open all his infinite treasures of goodness, and sweetness, and fulness, within the view of a soul, it could not but be ravished with the object, earnestly press into his presence, *ruere in amplexus*, and with a holy impatience throw itself into his arms! There would be need of setting bounds to the mount, to keep it from breaking through unto the Lord! What is said of the Queen of the South, when she had heard the wisdom, and seen the glory of *Solomon*, 2 *Cron.* ix. 4. would be more true of a Christian; there would be *no more spirit left* in him. Some have therefore observed the wisdom of God in engaging the soul in so dear a union with the body, that it might care for it, and not quit it; yea, the Heathen observed the wisdom of God in concealing the happy state of a separated soul, that so men might be content to live out their time, *victuroseque dii celant,*

*celant, ut vivere durent, fœlix esse mori.* But, alas ! we see but darkly as through a glass, and our affections towards God are proportionable to our apprehensions of him ; these are dark, and therefore those are dull. And Oh ! would to God they were but indeed proportionable ! for then we should love him only, if not earnestly ; and desire him entirely, if not sufficiently. Consider what I have hinted concerning the happiness of the soul in the enjoyment of God, and what I have more fully demonstrated concerning the body's hindering of it, and keeping it at a distance ; and then argue, Is happiness the main end of every being ? Must not this soul then, being a noble and immortal nature, needs look out for some high and noble happiness, suitable to its excellent self ? Can that be any where, but in the enjoyment of the highest and uncreated Good ? And can this never be attained whilst we are in this animal state, in this mortal body, that keeps us at such a distance ? Oh ! why then do we not look out after so much enjoyment of this blessed God, as we are now capable of, and long after a departure hence, that we may enjoy him freely and fully, and be eternally happy in him ! Oh ! be not only content, but even covetous.

But what ! shall the soul break the cage, that she may take her flight ? God forbid ! How can he pretend to be a lover of God, who is not formed into his will, subject to his ordination, content to abide in the station that he hath allotted him ? But if we may not break it to escape, yet methinks it may be safe enough, with submission, to wish it were broken. If we may not, with *Saul, dissolve ourselves,*

ourselves, yet with *Paul* we may *desire to be dissolved*. The perfection that most Christians attain to, is but to *desire to live* and be *content to die*. Oh ! consider what I have said on this matter, and invert the order of those words in your hearts, *Be content to live, desire to die.*

But what ! would you have us pray for death ? *Answer* : I speak not of a formal praying, either for one or the other. What the apostle speaks of the greatest of sins, *1 John v. 16*. I am ready to say of this state of freedom from all sin, *I do not say that ye should pray for it*. You will tell me that *David* and *Hezekiah* prayed for life ; and I could tell you that *Elijah* prayed for death, *1 Kings xix. 5*. he was indeed *a man subject to passions*, *James v. 17*. but I believe this was none of them. But I will not inveigle myself in any controversy : methinks the sad consideration laid before your eyes, whilst we are in the body, we are absent, distant from the Lord, should wring out an, *Oh ! wretched man that I am, &c. or an, I desire to be dissolved* : Or if not words, yet, at least, a groan after immortality, with our apostle here---*We groan within ourselves that mortality may be swallowed up of life.*

But can a soul possibly long for the *destruction* of the body ? Philosophy indeed tells us that it cannot. Be it so ; yet I am sure divinity teaches, that a soul may long after the redemption of the body ; the redemption of it from this kind of animal, corruptible, ensnaring condition that it is now in, *Rom. viii. 23*.---*We groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our body.* If we cannot wish to be *uncloathed*, yet we may long to be *cloathed*.

*clashed upon*, verse 4. of this chapter. At least, methinks, the Heathen should not out-do us, who could say, *Mori nolo, sed me mortuum esse nihil curio.*

But, will all cry, Oh if we were sure of an interest in Christ, of pardon of sin, of truth of grace, of eternal life, then we could freely leave all ?

*Answ.*

1. That is, you would live to be more holy before you die : you are not yet holy enough. No, nor never shall be till you die. If you long after holiness, long to be with God then ; for that is a state of perfect holiness. To desire to live, upon pretence of being more holy, is a mere fallacy, a contradiction. But, it may be, this is not the meaning of the objection : therefore,

2. A not having of what we would have, is not an excuse for not doing what we should do. It is our duty to rejoice in the Lord. *Phil. iv. 4.* which our not having of assurance, doth not except us from ; though, if we have assurance, we might indeed rejoice the more. But to take off this plea at once :

3. Our earnest longings after a full and perfect enjoyment of God, and so our breathings after an immortal state doth not depend upon our assurance, but indeed assurance rather depends upon that. I doubt not we are commonly mistaken in the nature of assurance ; and, it may be, are in a wrong manner curious about the *signs* of Christ's appearing in our souls. For certainly a well-grounded assurance of the love of God doth most discover and unfold itself in the growth of true godliness in the soul ; now the love of God, and

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an earnest desire to be like unto him, and to be with him, is the better half of all religion, *Matt.* xxii. 37, 38. so that it rather seems that assurance springs up from this frame of soul, than that this arises out of assurance. If assurance be the thing that you desire, get your souls joined to God in an union of affections, will, and ends, and then labour and long to be closer to him, liker to him, perfectly holy and happy in him; and be ye assured that Christ is in you of a truth: for these mighty works which he hath wrought, these divine breathings, these holy pantings after him, do bear witness of him.

4. Whether everyone come to that feeling knowledge, that powerful sense of your state or no, which you call assurance, yet know, that it is your duty to long after immortality. We are wont to call assurance the privilege of some few, but the Scriptures make this temper, that I am speaking of, the duty of all believers, which I the rather name, because I find few professors of this temper; and indeed but few that are willing to believe that they ought to be so. Our Saviour calls all believers to as much, in effect, as I do, *Luke* xxi. 28. *Look up, and lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh.* Whereby is not meant a bare posture and speculation, but joy and longing are required by that phrase, say the Dutch Annotat. See also *Rev.* xxii. 17. Consider further, (which, methinks, should strike cold to the hearts of cold-hearted professors) that this very temper is made one of the greatest characters of true and sincere saints. I do not know of any one oftener named, see *Rom.* viii. 23. *We groan within*

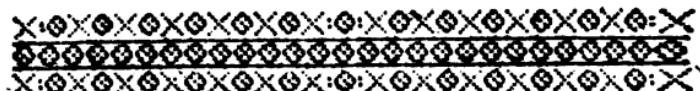
*within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our body,* 2 Tim. iv. 8. *The Lord shall give the crown to them that love his appearing,* Tit. ii. 13. We should live godly in this present world, *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,* 2 Pet. iii. 12. What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, *looking for, and hastening to the coming of the day of God,* Jude 21. Keep yourselves in the love of God, *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

Do all these plain and pathetical scriptures stand for cyphers in your eye? Methinks they should not. But not to stand upon the proof of it to be a duty, it matters not, whether there be an express command for it or no: this that I am speaking of, is not so much the duty of godly persons, as the very nature, genius and spirit, indeed of godliness itself. Methinks a godly soul, that is truly touched with divine goodness, influenced by it, and imprest with it, as the needle is with the loadstone, must need strive powerfully within itself to be in conjunction with it. A holy soul, that after all its wearisome defeats, and shameful disappointments in the creature, finds itself perfectly matched with this infinite, full, and perfect object, must certainly and necessarily be carried, without any other argument, with fervent longings after union to it, and communion with it. The Spouse might say concerning Christ, as concerning her, Cant. vi. 12. *Or ever I was vare, my soul made me like the chariots of Aminab.* And every godly soul, may in some degree, by with that spouse. Cant. v. 4. 5. *My beloved put*

*put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him: I rose up, &c.* Tell me, friends, how can divine grace, that well of living water in the soul, chuse but spring up into eternal life? *John iv. 14.* I doubt not to affirm, that that which is of God in the soul, must needs carry the soul after God; as it belongs to heaven, so it will be longing towards heaven. That which is of a divine original, must needs have a divine tendency; that which is of divine extraction, will have in it a divine attraction, and pursue a divine perfection, *Col. iii. 1.* That divine life and spirit, that runs through godly souls, doth awaken and exalt in some measure, all the powers of them, into an active and cheerful sympathy, with that absolute good that renders them compleatly blessed. Holiness and purity of heart will be attracting God more and more to itself; and the more pure our souls are, and the more separate from earthly things, the more earnestly will they endeavour the nearest union that may be with God; and so, by consequence, methinks they must needs, in some sense, desire the removal of that animal life, and dark body that stands in their way: for they know that that which now letteth, will let (such is the unchangeable nature of it, till it be laid in the dust) till it be taken out of the way. The thirsty king, did but cry for water of the well of *Bethlehem*, and his champions broke through the host of the Philistines, and fetched it, *2. Sam. xxiii. 15.* And will ye not allow the thirsty soul, if not to break through to fetch it, yet at least, to break out into an, *Oh! that one would give me to drink of the living water, of the fountain*

of grace, and peace, and love! Will ye allow hunger to break down *stone walls*? And will you neither allow the hungry soul to break down these *mud walls*, nor to wish within itself that they were broken down? In a word then, give me leave earnestly to press you to an earnest pressing after perfect fruition of, and eternal converse with God, and to change the apostle's words, *Heb. xii. 1.* Seeing we are compassed about with so great a divine light, and glory, and brightness, let us be willing and desirous to lay aside this weight of flesh, and this body that so easily resists us with sins and snares, and run with eagerness to the object that is set before us. *Amen. Amen.*

*Draw me, we will run after thee. Cant. i. 4.*



T H E  
A N G E L I C A L   L I F E.



MATT. XXII. 30.

*—Are as the angels of God in heaven.*

**T**HE doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the great things of the Christian religion, as they were accounted a strange thing by all the world, when they were first published and preached, so indeed by none less entertained, or rather more opposed, than by the wisest of men living in that age, viz. *Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees*; who were the *disputers of this world*, as the apostle's phrase is, *1 Cor. i. 20*. A thing of wonderful observation, not only to us in our day, but even to our blessed Lord himself, in the days of his flesh, who fetches the cause of it from heaven, and adores the infinite wisdom of God in it, *Matt. xi. 25*. Amongst other set disputationes that the Sadducees held with our Saviour, this, in this chapter, is very famous; where they dispute against the resurrection of the dead, by an argument fetched *ab absurdo*, ver. 25.  
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grounded upon an instance of a woman that had been married to seven husbands successively: Now, say they, if there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be then? Our Saviour answers, by destroying the ground of their argument, and shewing that they disputed upon a false supposition: For, saith he, *In the resurrection there shall be no marrying, but men shall be as the angels of God.* In which words this doctrine is plainly laid down, for I shall not meddle with the controversy.

Doct. *That the glorified saints shall be as the angels of God in heaven.* The other evangelists lay down the same truth, as you may find, *Mark* xii. 25. *Luke* xx. 36. In the explication of which point I will shew, 1. *Negatively*, wherein the saints shall not be like the angels. 2. *Affirmatively*, wherein they shall be like unto them, or as St. *Luke* hath it, *equal* to them.

1. *Negatively. The glorified saints shall not be like the angels in essence.* The angelical essence, and the rational soul are, and shall be different. Souls shall remain souls still, keep their own essence; the essence shall not be changed, souls shall not be changed into angelical essences.

2. *They shall not be wholly spirits, without bodies,* as the angels. The spirits of just men, now made perfect, are more like to the angels, in this sense, than they shall be after the resurrection: for now they are spirits without bodies, but the saints shall have bodies: not such as now (so corruptible, so crazy) not in any thing defective, not needing creature-supplies; but incorruptible, glorious bodies; in some sense, spiritual bodies; which are described by three characters, *1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.*

*Incorruptible, (somewhat more than immortal) glorious, powerful.* Neither doth their having bodies any whit abate of their perfection or glory, nor render them inferior to the angels ; for even the glorious Redeemer of the world hath a body, who is yet superior to the angels : and he shall change the vile bodies of the saints, and make them like unto his glorious body, *Phil. iii. ult.*

4. Neither have we any ground to believe that the saints shall be altogether *equal to the angels in dignity and glory* ; but rather, that as man was at first made a little lower than the angels, so that he shall never come to be exalted altogether so high as they : for it seemeth, that the natural capacity of an angel is greater than that of a man ; and so shall continue, for they are distinct kinds of creatures. As a beast cannot become so wise and intelligent as a man, (for then he would cease to be a beast) so neither can a man become so large and capable as an angel ; for then he would cease to be a man.

2. *Affirmatively.* The glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven. First, In their *qualities* ; that is,

1. In being *pure and holy*. Whether they shall be equal to them in positive holiness, or no, I know not ; whether they shall understand, and know, and love God, in all degrees, as much as as the angels ? It seems rather that they shall not ; because, as I said before, their capacity shall not be so large. But if in this they be not altogether equal to the angels, yet it implies no imperfection ; for they shall be positively holy, as far as their nature is capable, and so shall be perfect  
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in their kind, *Heb.* xii. 23. *The spirits of just men made perfect.* They shall in this be like unto the angels, if not equal to them, yea like unto God himself in it ; *Be ye holy as I am holy,* *1 Pet.* i. 15. *Mat.* v. ult. But as to negative holiness, the saints shall be even equal to the angels of God in heaven, *i. e.* they shall have no more sin, no more corruption than they have. They shall be as perfectly freed from all iniquities, imperfections, and infirmities, as the angels. What can be cleaner than that which hath no uncleanness at all in it ? Why, so clean shall all the saints be, *Rev.* xxi. 27. *No unclean thing shall enter into heaven.* They shall be without any kind of spot or blemish, *Ephes.* v. 27. which is a perfect negative holiness ; more cannot be said of the angels in this respect. As branches of this,

2. As the holy angels reverence the Divine Majesty, *Isa.* vi. 2, 3. they cover their faces with their wings, crying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Hosts ! so shall the glorified saints. You may see what sweet harmony they make, consenting together to give all the glory of all to God, *Rev.* vii. 9, 11, 12. The saints stood and cried, *Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.* The angels stood round about, saying, *Amen. Amen.*

3. In their readiness to do the will of God, and execute his commands ; therefore the angels are described to have wings, *Isa.* vi. 2. *with twain they did fly.* How God shall please to employ angels or saints, in the world to come, is not for us to enquire ; but they shall be alike ready to do his will, and serve his pleasure, whatever it shall be.

Even whilst the saints are imperfect on earth, they can cry, *Here am I, send me*, Isa. vi. 8. How much more ready shall they be then, when all their fetters are knocked off!

4. They shall be as the angels in their *cheerful* and *unwearied* execution of the will of God : so the angels are, and so shall the saints be. The spirit shall be then *more* willing, and the flesh shall be *no more* weak, as it is now ; for when it is raised again, it shall be in *power*, 1 Cor. xv. 43. More things of this nature might be added, but I pass lightly over them, because, although they are true, yet they are not principally looked at in this text ; therefore I come to the second thing, wherein the glorified saints shall be like unto the angels : and that is,

2. In their *way of living*. They shall be like the angels, i. e. (faith one truly) living like the angels. How is that ? Our Saviour tells us, Neither marrying, nor being given in marriage. It is added presently, in Luke xx. 36. *For neither can they die any more.* If there be no dying, there will be no need of propagation ; if no need of propagation, then why should they marry ? The angels are single, and know no other conjunction, but with God in a spiritual manner : no more shall the saints. But what great matter is that to be like the angels in ? What perfection is that ? Many saints, yea and sinners too upon earth, are so like the angels ; nay, and the devils too. Therefore you must know that our Saviour, under this phrase of ~~not~~ marrying, &c. doth comprehend all manner of *creature-converse*, all kind of living upon, and delighting in the creature, by a *synecdoche* of

of the part, as is ordinary in Scripture. *I have not given upon usury,* saith the prophet, yet the people curse me, *Jer.* xv. 10. i. e. I have had no dealing in the world, no negotiation. By one kind he understands the whole, *Ezek.* xxv. 41. where, by eating their fruits, and drinking their milk, is understood the possessing of all that was theirs ; and, in many other places, the spirit of God uses this tropical way of speaking.

The angels of God, neither marry, nor are given in marriage, *i. e.* they live not upon any created good, delight not in any created comfort, but live intirely upon God, converse with him, are everlastinglly beholding his glory, and delighting themselves in him : Thus shall the glorified saints live for ever. Their bodies shall not need, or use created supplies, food, physick, raiment, &c. which things, in this animal state, they stand in need of, *Matt.* vi. 32. But that is not all ; for their souls shall not any longer desire, or hanker after any created thing ; but (as the angels) shall be possessed of God, filled with the fulness of God ; all the powers and faculties of them, perfectly refined and spiritualized, abstracted from all created things, eternally rejoicing and delighting themselves in the contemplation and participation of the supream and infinite good : For during this earthly and imperfect state, not only the bodies of good men feed upon, and are sustained by the creatures in common with other men, but even their souls taste too much of worldly contentments, and drink too deep of earthly pleasures, and creature-comforts : Even the most refined souls upon earth, though they do not properly feed upon

upon any thing below God, yet do oft dip the end of their rod in this honey that lies upon the earth (with *Jonathan*) do cast an unchaste eye upon their earthly enjoyments, and delight in them in a way too gross and unspiritual ; having abstracted them from God, and loving them with a distinct love. But in the resurrection, it shall not be so : For the holy souls shall be perfectly conformed to the holy God, shall feed upon him singly, live upon him entirely, be wrapped up in him wholly, and be satisfied in him solely and everlastinglly ; and so shall they be *equal to the angels*. The creature, although it doth not fill any truly sanctified soul upon earth, yet it hath some room there ; but then it shall be perfectly cast out, and the soul shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The creature is now much in some godly souls, and something in all of them ; but then it shall be nothing at all to them, or in them. But God shall be *all in all*, all things in all of them, as the way of the saints living, and their glorified state is described, *I Cor. xv. 28. that God may be all in all.* *They shall inherit all things.* But how is that ? Why, see the explication of it in the following words, God will be their God, *Rev. xxi. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God.* God shall be unto them instead of all things. In that state there shall be no need of sun or moon, *Rev. xxi. 23.* by which excellent and useful creatures, the whole creation seems to be understood ; for they that shall live above the sun and moon, shall certainly live above all things that are below these. But how then ? Why it follows, *The glory of God shall enlighten them*

them, and the Lamb shall be their light. So Rev. xxii. 5. *And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light.* All happiness is derived into them from God; and therefore there shall be no night, no want of any creature-comfort to them, neither shall they desire any thing more of the creature, whether small or great, whether candle or sun. For explication of this their blessed life, let me allude to that of our Saviour, Luke xii. 24. *The fowls of the heaven neither sow nor reap, yet God feedeth them.* So the saints of heaven neither want or desire any created good, so they feed upon God, the supreme and infinite good. And again, verse 27. *The lillies neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.* These blessed souls have no respect at all to things terrene and created, yet are they so filled and adorned with the glory of the infinite Majesty, that *Solomon, in all his glory, was a filthy and ragged thing in comparison of them.* In a word, the state of the glorified saints and angels is set out by our Saviour in the same manner, by one and the same description, and that is, the seeing of God. The life of angels is called a continual beholding of the face of God, Matt. xviii. 10. and the state of the saints glory and happiness is also a seeing of God, Matt. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14. Rev. xxii. 4. *They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.* Now this phrase, the seeing of God, applied both to the saints and angels, doth place their happiness in God alone, excluding the creature; and it doth import the fulness, and clearness, and certainty of that their bliss.

Thus

Thus I have shewed you in what *sense* (though I am not able to shew you in what *degree*) the glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven. - Their way of living, *viz.* upon the blessed God alone, shall be the same with that of the holy angels.

*Application.* From the discovery of the future state of the saints, I find myself filled with indignation.

1. *Reproof.* Against the carnal conceits that many Christians have of heaven. *Christians* do I call them ! Nay, herein they seem rather *Mahometans*, who place heaven in the full and lasting enjoyment of all creature-comforts ; nay, indeed, of sinful and abominable pleasures, as one may read in their *Akoran*. It may be few Christians are altogether so sensual, but sure I am the far greater sort of Christians (so called) are very gross and carnal ; at least, very low in their conceits of the state of future happiness. Heaven is a word as little understood as holiness ; and that, I am sure, is the greatest mystery in the world. It would be tedious to run through the particular various apprehensions of men in this matter, and indeed impossible to know them. The common sort of people understand either just nothing by heaven but a glorious name ; or at best, but a freedom from bodily torment. As nothing of hell affects them, but that dreadful word *fire* ; so nothing of heaven, but the comfortable word *rest*, or *safety*. Others, it may be, think there is something positive in heaven ; and they dream of an honourable, easy, pleasant life, free from such kind of toils, labours, pains, persecutions, reproaches,

proaches, penuries which men are subject to in this life. This is a true notion, but much below the nature of that happy state.

Others are yet more highly affected with the words of *glory* and *glorious*, and seem to be much ravished with them; but are like men in amaze, or wonderment, that admire something that they understand not, and are altogether confounded in their own apprehensions of it: as if a man should be mightily taken with such a fine name as *Arabia the happy*, and by a blind fervor of mind, should desire to go and visit it, Others rise higher yet, in their apprehensions of heaven, and look upon it as a holy state; but that holiness is negative, *viz.* a perfect freedom from sin, and all temptations to it: and indeed, this is a precious consideration, and that, wherein many a weary soul, finds much rest. But yet, this amounts not to the life of angels; it is a lower consideration of heaven, than what our Saviour here presents us with. The state of the glorified saints, shall not only be a state of freedom, from temporal pains, or eternal pains, or a freedom from spiritual pains and imperfections; but a state of perfect *positive holiness, pure light, ardent love, spiritual liberty, holy delights*; when all created good shall perfectly vanish, all created love shall be swallowed up, the soul shall become of a most godlike disposition, shining forth in the glory that he shall put upon it, glorying in nothing but the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in his divine image and perfections, and wrapt up intirely into his infinite fulness to all eternity: which hath made me oftentimes to nauseate, and indeed to blame the poor

poor low descriptions of the kingdom of heaven, which I have found in books and sermons, for too dry, yea, and gross; which describe heaven principally as a place, and give it such circumstances of beauty, firmness, security, light and splendor, pleasant society, good neighbourhood, as they think will most commend an earthly habitation. True indeed, the Holy Ghost, in scripture, is pleased to condescend so far to our weak capacities, as to describe that glorious state to us by such things, as we best understand, and are apt to be most taken with, and do most gratify our senses in this world; as a *kingdom, paradise, a glorious city, a crown, an inheritance, &c.* But yet, it is not the will of God, that his enlightened people should rest in such low notions of eternal life: For in other places, God speaks of the state of glory, according to the nature and excellency of it, and not according to the weakness of our understanding; and describes it at another rate, calling it the *life of angels*; and here, *the beholding of God* (Matt. v. 8.) *a coming unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* Ephes. iv. 13. God's being *all* things in us, 1 Cor. xv. 28. It is called a *knowing of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ*, John xvii. 3. In a word, which is as high as can be spoke, higher indeed than can be perfectly understood, it is called a *being like unto God*, 1 John iii. 21. *We shall be like unto him.* But this use is not so much for *reproof* as it is for *information*.

2. Here is matter of *reproof*, yea and of just indignation against the gross, low, sensual, earthly life of professors, who yet hope to be the children of

of the resurrection, and to be as the angels of God in heaven. What ! hope to be like them then, and yet altogether unlike them now ! I speak not in a passion, but out of a just indignation that I have conceived against myself, and against the generality even of saints themselves. I am not going to speak of *covetousness*, commonly so called ; there is a sin much like to it, which is not indeed a single sin, but an evil and unseemly temper, which is *earthly mindedness*, or minding of earthly things ; or if you will, because I would not be misunderstood, a living upon the creature, or a loving of the creature with a distinct love. Oh ! the insensible secrecy, and insuperable power of this creature-love ! I cannot sufficiently exclaim against it. Why do we spend noble affections upon such low and empty nothings ! Are we called with such a *high calling*, think you, that our conversation should be so low ? Is the fulness of the fountain your's, and do ye yet delight to sit down by, and bathe yourselves in the shallow streams ? Is your *life hid with Christ in God* ? Why then do you converse as if your life was bound up in the creature ? Have you laid up your treasure in the blessed God ? What do your hearts then so far from it ? Is your *happiness* in heaven ? Why then is not your *conversation* there too ? Do you count it your bliss to *see God* ? What then mean those fond and wanton *glances* that ye cast upon created comforts, and that unchaste love which you bestow upon things below ? I mean, not only the *bleatings of the sheep, and the lowings of the oxen* ; I speak not of the grosser sort of earthly-mindedness, sensuality, or covetousness, but of that

more refined and hidden creature-love; a loving of friends, relations, health, liberty, life, and that not in God, but with a love distinct from that love wherewith we love God. To love all these in God, and for his sake, and as flowing from him, and partaking of him, and with the same love wherewith we love God himself, is allowed us; but to love them with a particular love, as things distinct from God, to delight in them merely as creatures, and to follow them as if some good, or happiness, or pleasure, were to be found in them distinct from what is in God; this is a branch of spiritual *adultery*, I had almost said *idolatry*. To taste a sweetness in the creature, and to see a beauty and goodness in it, is our duty; but then it must be the sweetness of God in it, and the goodness of God which we ought alone to taste and see in it. As we say, *Uxor splendet radis mariti*, the wife shines with the rays of her husband; so, more truly, every creature shines but by a borrowed light; and commends unto us the goodness, and sweetness, and fulness of the blessed Creator. You have heard that the glorified souls shall live upon God alone, entirely, wholly, eternally; and should not the less glorious souls, I mean gracious souls, do so too, in some degree? Yea even we who are upon earth, and do yet use creatures, should beheld all the scattered beams of goodness, sweetness, perfection that are in these creatures, all united and gathered up in God, and so feed upon them only in God, and upon God in all them. It is the character of wicked and godless men that they set up, and drive a trade for themselves; live in a way distinct from God, as though

though they had no dependance upon him, they love the world with a predominant love ; they enjoy creature-comforts in a gross, unspiritual manner ; they dwell upon the dark side of their mercies ; they treasure up riches, not only in their *chests*, but in their *hearts* ; they feed upon the creature, not only with their *bodies*, but their very *souls* feed upon them : and thus, in a word, they *live without God in the world*. All this is no wonder, for that which is of the earth must needs be earthly, *John* iii. 31. But is it not a monstrous thing, that a heavenly soul should feed upon earthly trash ? I speak without any *hyperbole*; the famous king of *Babylon*, forsaking the society of men, and herding himself with the beasts of the earth, and eating grass with the oxen, was not so absurd a thing, nor half so monstrous or unseemly as the children of the most high God, forsaking the true bread of souls, and feeding upon the low fare of carnal men, even created sweetness, worldly goods. Nay, a glorious star falling from its own sphere, and choaking itself in the dust, would not be such an eminent piece of baseness ; for what is said of the true God in one sense, *John* iii. 31. is true of the truly godly in this sense, *He that cometh from heaven is above all* ; i. e. above all things that are below God himself.

3. Shall this life of angels be also the life of saints ? *This may then serve as a powerful consideration to mortify in us the love of this animal life*, to make us weary of this low kind of living, and quicken us to long after so blessed a change. Well might the apostle say indeed, that to die was gain, *Phil.* i. 21. For, is not this gain, to exchange

an *animal* life for an *angelical* life? A life, which is, in some sense, common to the very beasts with us, for that which, in some sense, may be called the life of God? For as the blessed and holy God lives upon his own infinite and self-sufficient fulness, without being beholden to any thing without himself, so shall the saints live upon him, and upon the self-same infinite fulness, and shall not need any creature-contributions. The apostle indeed saith, that *the last enemy to be destroyed is death*, 1 Cor. xv. 26. which is true of enemies without us; and it is true with respect to Christ, who shall make a general resurrection from the dead, for that is the proper meaning of it. But it is true also, that the last enemy, to be overcome within us, is the love of life; therefore it is said, that a man will part with any thing to keep his life, Job ii. 4. And we generally excuse the matter, and cry, Oh! life is sweet, life is precious! It must be confessed, and it may be granted, I believe that there is an inclination of the soul to the body, (arising from the dear and inconceivable union that God himself hath made of them) which is purely natural, some say altogether necessary for the maintaining of man in this complex state, and not in itself sinful. Possibly there may be found a man upon earth so holy and mortified, in whom this is not found; certainly it is the last hindrance to be removed out of the way of our perfect happiness. This, although in itself natural, yea necessary, and without blame, yet in the inordinateness of it, ordinarily, if not constantly, becomes sinful. I count him the most perfect man in the world, who loves not his own life

life with an inordinate, sinful love ; who loves it only in God, and not with a creature-love distinct from God. There are two ways whereby this natural and lawful love of life becomes sinful, viz. *immoderateness* and *inordinateness*. *Immoderateness* is, when men love their lives at that rate, that they are filled with unreasonable and distracting fears, cares, and thoughts about them, when the whole *business* of life is almost nothing else but a studiousness to preserve the *being* of life. *Inordinateness* is, when men, though they do not love their lives at that excessive rate, yet do love life as a creature-good not in God, nor in order to him, but love it for itself, as something out of God. Every carnal man in the world is guilty of the latter, and I doubt but few saints altogether free from the guilt of it. Now that this immoderate love of life ought to be subdued in Christians, all men almost will grant ; if any will not grant it, we can easily prove it from the command of God, *Matt. vi. 15. Take no thought for your life.* *1 John ii. 15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* Both which words, in the most favourable interpretation that can be given of them, do, in the judgment of all, forbid immoderation ; nay, a meer philosopher would enforce this from meer moral considerations, which I cannot now stand upon. But this inordinate love of life, as it is a more secret, sticking evil, a more refined corruption, is harder to be discovered, and men are loth to be convinced of the evil of it.

Now this particular distinct loving of life, not as in God, but in itself, as a creature good, is clearly condemned in that first and great commandment,

mandment, *Mat. 22. vers. 37.* *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,* q. d. God the supreme, infinite, perfect, original, essential, self-sufficient good, is to be loved in the highest, and purest, and strongest manner, that the heart of man is capable to love; and all other things only in him, and under him, and as being of him, and for his sake. Let it be allowed, that life is good; yet it must be added, that it is but a created good: Let it be allowed that life is comfortable; yet it must be acknowledged, that man's chief comfort and happiness, doth not stand in this animal life. So then, life itself is to be loved in God, who is the fountain and spring of life, it is to be loved in the quality of a created good, and no otherwise: Now, created goods, are to be loved only in the creator, as coming from him, as partaking of him, as leading to him. Argue the case a little, thus: The soul of man is allowed to love its body, with which the great God hath matched it: and to love union with this body, which union we call life: but this body being a creature, and a creature, much inferior to itself, and much more ignoble than itself, cannot in reason be judged to be the fit and adequate object of its strongest and best affections: That must needs be something more excellent than itself, and that cannot be any thing in this world (for this world hath nothing so noble, so excellent in it, as the soul of man) it must indeed be the creator himself. Well, seeing God is the supreme, self-sufficient, perfect good, he is to be loved with all the strength and powers of the soul, singly and entirely: and

and the will of God, being God himself, is not only to be submitted to, or rested in, but to be chosen and loved above all created things ; yea, even above life itself, the best of creatures. So then, if it be the will of God, to call for our lives, we ought readily to give them up ; because, we ought to love the will of God, much more than our lives. I pray you, drink in that notion, *viz.* that the will of God being pure, holy, perfect, should not only be submitted to, or rested in, but even loved and chosen above all creatures : now the will of God, is not that only, whereby he teacheth men, and prescribes laws to them, but that whereby he rules, and governs the world, and disposes of men in any condition of life, or takes away their lives from them. The eternal fountain of goodness can send forth nothing but what is perfectly good : and that which is perfectly good, ought to be loved with an universal, pure, and (as far as possible) perfect love. This you will say, perhaps, is a high and a hard saying : but let it not seem impossible, for a man to love his own life only in God, and in subordination to him ; for this God requires (and he requires not things impossible) *Luke* xiv. 26. *If any man come after me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple, i. e.* not simply hate it, but in comparison of me and my will : it is not then impossible ; nay, you see it is a necessary duty, without which, we cannot be Christ's disciples. The saints of old found it possible. Holy Paul gives this answer readily, *Act. xxi. 13.* *I am ready to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus;* and *Act. xx. 24.* *I count not my life dear unto me,*

*so that I might finish my course with joy : it is witnessed of the whole army of the saints, in Rev. xii. 11. That they loved not their lives unto the death, i. e. they did not value them in respect of God and his truth.* Neither let any one flatter himself, and say, Yea, if I were called to die for God, I would rather do it than deny him : for the will of God is as much to be eyed in his sending for us by a natural death, as by martyrdom, and a not giving up our lives to him at any time, is as truly to deny him, and his will, as not to give them up at the stake, when we are called to it. Besides, how shall we imagine, that he, who is unwilling to die in his bed, should be willing to die at a stake ? Now, this duty of being mortified to the love of this animal life, being so difficult, yet so necessary, and so noble ; how doth it become every saint to study to attain to this perfection ? Which, that we may, let us press upon ourselves this consideration, this doctrine, *that the glorious saints shall live as the angels of God in heaven.* We know, that if this body were broken down, this low life cut off, we should live like angels, not being behoden any more to poor creatures, for help or comfort, but should be filled with the fulness of God, filled with his image and glory, and live upon him entirely for evermore. Yea, I may add, that this very living above our own lives, merely at the will of God, is a participation of the angelical life even in this world. Therefore labour to be mortified to that love of this life which is here upon earth ; yea, be weary of it ; yea, almost ashamed of it.

4. Shall we thus live the lives of the angels, subsisting in God, feasting upon him, filled with him to all eternity ? *This may moderate our sorrow which we conceive for the loss of any created good,* houses, lands, husband, wife, children, &c, yet a little while, and we shall not miss them, shall not need them, shall not desire them any more. The blessed angels live a glorious life, and they have none of these, but are perfectly satisfied in the enjoyment of God alone ; they have no wives or children, yet they want none ; and yet a little while, and we shall have none, neither shall we want them, having all things in the God of all things : they neither marry, nor are given in marriage ; but are in conjunction with the father, with love, and goodness, and truth itself ; and so they have no want of any thing. If you have no candles left in the house, yet it is towards day-break, and the sun will rise upon you, and you shall need none, and yet have light enough too. In a word, learn to live beside them whilst you have them, and you will be better able to live without them, when they are removed.

5. I come now to the fifth and last use that I shall make of this doctrine ; and Oh that you and I may make this happy use of it ! Shall the saints be as the angels of God in their way of living, in living upon God, and enjoying all happiness in him alone for ever ? Shall this certainly be our life in heaven ? Oh then *labour to begin this life upon earth !* If you cannot perfectly transcribe, yet, at least, imitate that angelical kind of life. Though you are here imprisoned in a body of earth, and often cumbered and clogged with

with bodily infirmities, and called to attend upon bodily necessities ; yet, as far as this animal state will permit, live upon God. Do not excuse or vindicate that low kind of earthly life ; do not justify your living below and besides God, but stir up yourselves to behold where your happiness lies, and live not willingly below it. Certainly a godly soul hath more than bare hope in this world ; God the blessed, infinite, and communicative good, hath not locked up himself so far out of sight, but that he gives his people a comfortable beholding of him, even whilst they are in their pilgrimage : and what *Solomon* saith of the life of the godly, he means it of their present life. *Prov. xv. 24. The way of life is above to the wise.* Their living not only shall be, but is now above ; it is a high way of living. They are certainly a puny sort of mechanical Christians, that think and talk only of a heaven to come, and dream of an happiness without them, and distinct from them. The truly godly and God-like soul cannot so content himself, but being spirited and principled from above, is carried out after the Infinite and Almighty Good, as a thing is carried towards its centre ; and hastens into his embraces, as the iron hastens to the loadstone, and longs to be in conjunction with it. If therefore ye be from heaven, live above all earthly things. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above,* Col. iii. 1. If ye be born of God, live upon God, and suck not the breasts of a stranger. Deny self, live beside self, i. e. live not to your lust, live not to the service of your senses, to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eye, to the pride of life ; let not your souls be servants to your sins, nor nor to your senses ;

senses ; that were for servants to ride on horseback, and princes to walk on foot, *Eccles.* x. 7. Live above self, i. e. let your souls quit all their own interest in themselves, and entirely resign themselves to God, as to all points of duty and service. But that is not all ; neither is that it, which I press you to from these words, but live above the creature and whatsoever is in it, viz. delighting in God, conversing and communing with him alone, as the chief good. Desire not any creature any further than as it may help you forward to the Creator ; neither delight in it any further than as it either represents some of the divine perfections, witnesseth something of divine love, or leadeth to some divine participation or communion. Seeing we shall come to live upon God, and delight in God alone without any creature, let us now live upon, feed upon, love God alone in every creature. Now to give you a more distinct knowledge of this high and noble life, I will explain it in some particulars, negatively and affirmatively. First, *Negatively*,

1. *Live not upon self*; I speak not of living unto self, but live not upon self, Self-excellencies, self-sufficiencies, any created accomplishments, which was the life of the *Stoicks*, those great philosophers, who placed happiness in the enjoyment of themselves. To enjoy one's self, indeed, is a high duty, a noble privilege, a duty of the gospel, *Luke* xxi. 19. *Possess ye your souls* : but how must we enjoy ourselves ? Why only in God. He enjoys himself,

1. Not he who in a sullen melancholy, retires to a solitary and monastical life, as many of the sourer sort of papists do.

2. Nor

2. Nor he, that in a proud mood, despairs the perfections of God, shining forth in other men; and hiding himself from them through envy, contents himself to sit and admire his own personal accomplishments, as many humorists do.

3. Nor he, who finding nothing without him, or knowing nothing above him, to give his soul her full rest, settles upon a foundation of his own, and admires a self-sufficiency in the temper of his own spirit, a little subdued by philosophical precepts, as the Stoicks did, and our Quaker's do: but he, who enjoys himself in God, i. e. who doth not view himself in the narrow point of his own being, but taking a view of himself, in the unbounded essence of God, loves, and enjoys, and values himself, and all his personal excellencies, as he is in God, and partakes of his perfections. To live in a way, of self-converse, is below the end of man's creation, who was made for a higher good: and hereby, a man shall never obtain true happiness, for it is peculiar to God alone, to be happy in himself. " In a word, a soul, " that confines itself to itself, and lives, and moves, " and rejoices only within the narrow cell of its " own particular being, deprives itself of that " almighty and original goodness and glory that " fills the world, and shines through the whole " Creation."

2 *Live not upon any creature without yourselves.* Self indeed, is a creature, but yet, for clearness in proceeding, we shall distinguish them. Now this is the life of the greatest sort of men, they live beside God, and move only within the sphere of the creature: You will easily understand, that I speak

speak not of the body's living upon the creature; for so God hath appointed, that it shall live: and yet as to this too, I say with our Saviour, *man liveth not by bread alone, &c.* But I speak of the soul of man living upon the creature as its highest good, and feeding upon it, as its best fare: they rise up early, and sit up late, and God is not in all their thoughts: they are filled with domestic and foreign comforts, but behold not the father of lights, from whom all these descend: they live upon the good things of the world, yet, live without God in the world. Now by these men,

1. I do not mean those heathens, that in the most idolatrous manner, do in the literal sense, set up the creatures for gods.

2. Nor those Christians that, in a most gross manner, make idols of the creatures, and place their happiness in them.

3. No, nor only those earthly professors, who follow the world too eagerly, and have such a deep and rooted respect for it, that they can be ordinarily content to suffer creature-employments, to jostle God and duties out of their hearts and houses, whose worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion. Who then? Shall we come any nearer? Yes.

4. Those are guilty of creature-converse, who do not enjoy all creatures in God; who love any thing in any creature with a distinct love; who do not love it only in God; who love silver, gold, houses, lands, trading, friends, with a particular pinching love. Oh! take heed of this creature-love; of valuing any created thing any otherwise than

than in God, any otherwise than as being from God, partaking of him, and leading to him.

3. *Live not upon ordinances.* These are God's institutions ; love them, cleave to them, attend upon them, let no temptation cause you to leave them, but live not upon them ; place not your religion, place not your hope, your happiness in them, but love them only in God ; attend upon them, yet not so much upon them as upon God in them ; lie by the pool, but wait for the angel ; love not, no not a divine ordinance for its own sake. Why, who doth so ? Alas ! who almost doth not ?

1. Thus did they in *Ezek xxxiii. 32.* who delighted in the prophet's eloquence, and in the rhetoric of his sermons, as much as in a well-tuned voice, and harmonious music ; and so do thousands in *England*, who read the Bible for the style or the story's sake, and love to sit under learned and elegant discourses, more for *accomplishment* than for *conversion* ; and swarms of priests, who preach themselves more than Christ Jēsus, even in his own ordinances ; as a proud boy rides a horse into the market, to set forth himself more than his master's goods.

2. But there are many not so gross as these, who yet use ordinances in a way very gross and unspiritual, placing their devotions in them, and sinking their religion into a settled course of hearing, or praying, who will wait upon God (as they call it) at some set and solemn times, *new moons* and *sabbaths*, it may be evening and morning, but religion must not be too busy with them, nor intermeddle in their ordinary affairs, or worldly employments,

ployments, it hath no place there ; they do not count it a garment for every day's wear.

3. And not only these, but even almost all men are apt to seek rest in duties and ordinances ; or, at least, to be pretty well satisfied with the work done, whether they have conversed with God there or no. O if you love your souls, seek your happiness higher ! Conversing with divine ordinances, I confess, is honourable and amiable, but it is too low a life for an immortal soul. *Affirmatively* ;

Let nothing satisfy you but God himself ; take up with no pleasure, no treasure, no portion, no paradise ; nay, no heaven, no happiness below the infinite, supreme, and self-sufficient good. Let your eye be upon him, and his all-filling fulness ; let your desire be unto him, and to the remembrance of his name ; follow hard after, to know the Lord, and to enjoy the Father through his Son Jesus Christ ; let your fellowship be with the Son by the Spirit; *1 John i. 3. O love the Lord, all ye his saints. Psal. xxxi. 23. Yea, love him with all your soul, and all your strength. Matt. xxii. 37. Yea and keep yourselves always in the love of God. Jude 21. Persevere and increase in the love of God.* Keep yourselves in the love of God. O sweet duty ! O amiable, pleasant task ! O sweet and grateful command ! Away, ye crowd of creatures ! I must keep my heart for my God. Away, ye gaudy suitors ! Away, ye glittering toys ! there is no room for you. My whole soul, if its capacity were ten thousand times larger than it is, were too scant to entertain the supreme Good, to let in infinite goodness and fulness. O charge it upon

yourselves with the greatest vehemence ! Love the Lord, O my soul, keep thyself in the love of God ; let the love of God constrain you, and keep yourselves under the most powerful restraints of it. In a word, live upon God as upon uncreated life itself ; drink at the fountain, feed upon infinite fulness ; depend upon almighty power ; refer yourselves to unsearchable wisdom and unbounded love ; see nothing but God in the creature, taste nothing but God in the world ; delight yourselves in him ; long for communion with him, and communications from him, to receive of his fulness grace for grace. Then do we live most like angels, when we live most purely in God, and find all the powers of our souls spending themselves upon him, and ourselves, our life, and all the comforts of it flowing from him, and again swallowed up in him. But because we are yet in the body, I shall explain it in these following particulars.

i. *Converse with God in all your self-excellencies.* I bade you before, not converse with these ; now, I say, converse with God in these. Thus do the angels, they know nothing that they have of their own, they enjoy nothing distinct from God : they are excellent creatures, excellent in knowledge, power, holiness, &c. yet they enjoy all their excellencies in God, and ascribe them all to him, *Rev. vii. 12.* And so let us labour to do.

i. View yourselves ; not in your own particular beings, but in the essence of God ; look upon yourselves, as being and subsisting in the midst of an infinite essence, in which the whole creation is, as it were, wrapt up, and doth subsist.

2. And

2. And whatever excellency you find in your souls or bodies, look not upon it as your own; maintain not a *Meum* and *Tuum*, a distinction of interests between God and yourselves; but look upon all as God's, and enjoy it in him.

2. When you find yourselves tempted to cast a fond and unchaste look upon the beauty, strength, activity, or temper of your own bodies, upon the ingenuity, wisdom, constancy, courage, composedness of your own souls; take heed of settling into a selfish admiration of any of them, but enjoy them in God, and say, this, O my body, this, O my soul, is no other than the portraiture of the blessed God; these created excellencies are broken beams of the infinite, unspotted, uncreated perfections, *Jer. ix. 23. 24.* Having once attained, to this, we shall no longer covet to be admired, desire to be commended, fret at being under-valued; I mean not in a selfish manner, but rather break out in a spiritual passion with the Psalmist, *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!* *Psalms cvii. 8.*

3. Nay, let me add, when you find yourselves ready to put your own stamp upon God's best coin, to look upon supernatural gifts and graces with a sinful, selfish admiration, remember that you have them only in Christ Jesus, and enjoy them in your head. Labour to enjoy grace itself only in Christ, as the apostle, *Gal. ii. 20. I, yet not I, but Christ in me. I laboured, yet not I, but the grace of God,* *1 Cor. xv. 10.* So ought we to glory; I believe, I love, I am patient, penitent, humble; yet not I, but the grace of God that is

with me, Christ Jesus that dwelleth in me. And indeed a godly man, who thus lives at the very height of his own being, yea and above it too, knows best how to reverence himself, yea and to love himself too, and yet without any self-love ; for he loves himself in God, and his own endowments as divine ornaments.

2. Converse with God, and live upon him in the excellencies of all other creatures, and in all your creature-enjoyments. We cannot live without creatures, as the angels do indeed ; but let us come as near them as we can, which is by living above creatures. Place your happiness in God, and your hearts upon him; labour to find God all things to you, and in you, and to be filled with his fulness ; labour to get your understandings filled with the knowledge of God, your wills filled with his divine will, your hearts filled with his infinite goodness and sweetness, your memories filled with the remembrance of his name, your whole souls filled with his holy and pure image, filled with the fruits of his holy spirit ; nay, let these very bodies be filled, not only with his good creatures, but more especially with his good will in the creatures. It is said indeed of the sensual Epicures of the world, that *their bellies are filled with God's hid treasure*, i. e. with rare and precious delicacies : but how much better doth God fill the bellies of his saints with his hid treasures, when he feedeth them with his divine favour, and *dippeth his hand with them in the dish?* This is meat within meat, which the saints eat of ; which other men, though they feed at the same table, know not of. The glorified saints shall be satisfied

fied wholly and perfectly with the divine image, shining gloriously on them, and in them; to which purpose that of the Psalmist may be accommodated, *Psal. xvii. ult. When I awake, &c.* Well, we cannot be so satisfied in this life, it seems; however, though we cannot be so satisfied with it, yet let us not be satisfied without it, or satisfied with any thing besides it. Resolve, holy soul, well, if I must not be fully satisfied with the image of my heavenly Father till I awake, I will lie down and fall asleep hungry as I am then; for I will not fill my mouth with chaff, nor my soul with the *husks that the swine eat.* But, in the mean time, get what you can of God out of creature-enjoyments.

1. *Enjoy all things for God;* and that these two ways:

1. *Use all for him.* Those riches, honours, interests, friends, which are *clogs upon the heels* of others, let them be as *heels* to you to carry you Heaven-ward; let your souls be *winged* with those very enjoyments wherewith the *wings* of others are *pinioned*; and that which is fuel to their worldly lusts, let it be as fuel to feed and nourish your spiritual love. To use what we have for God, is the only way of not abusing it. This is one way of enjoying all for God, to use all for him; and yet there is something higher in that phrase of enjoying all for God than this, *viz.*

2. *Value no creature-comfort any further than as it leads to God;* and this in a double sense too. First, Value things to be good only by this, by their leading you unto God. *Perfectum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum.* Now God, being the supreme

supreme and infinite good, any thing is so far good as it leads to the enjoyment of him. Now the enjoyment of God is only in being like to him ; holiness is his image : so then every thing is good that tends to sanctification, and to make men partakers of a divine nature. We are usually mistaken in the true notion of good and evil, of mercies and judgments, judging according to the taste, as foolish patients do ; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. Measure all things by the proportion they bear, and the tendency they have to the supreme good ? and call not any thing evil that brings nearer to him, nor any thing good that draws off from him. *Secondly*, When you have found a thing that is really good, tending and leading to the chief good, and to the possession of him, labour to enjoy it ; and rejoice in it only under this notion, as such ; when you love it, let it be with a pure spiritual love ; and so order your delight in it, that it may be said, you rather rejoice in the end of it than in the enjoyment of it.

2. Another way of living upon God in the creature, is, *To enjoy all things as partaking of him. Every good and perfect gift is from above.* Every beam of created light floweth out of the *Father of light*, James i. 17. When the blessed and glorious God framed this stately fabric of the visible world, because there was nothing better in the world than himself; he was pleased to copy out himself in it, and to spread his own infinite perfections over it, and through it, Rom. i. 20. so that every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness, every created excellency is a dark draught of God, and a broken beam of this infinite Sun.

of Righteousness. Created life, beauty, wisdom, goodness, sweetness, are nothing else but effluxes, or rather ebullitions out of the self-sufficient fountain, scant communications made of himself from uncreated life, essential wisdom, universal goodness. And under this notion we ought only to enjoy them, and delight in them ; and if we do so, we do not so much enjoy them, as God in them. Oh ! labour to do so ! Look upon the perfections which you find here below, not so much as the perfections of this or that particular being, but as they are so many drops risen out of the Fountain of all Perfection, in whom they all meet, and are concentrated. It is well expressed by one, *In a particular being love the universal goodness*; let the whole world be as the garden of God to you, where every creature is a flower, from which you may suck something of the divine sweetness. Alas ! at what a low and sensual rate do we live, when we rejoice in creatures, either as they are excellent, or as they are ours ! Whereas, indeed, neither of these is true, for they are not excellent, but God is excellent in them. And how can we call any thing our own, when God made both us and all things for himself ? Oh ! how injurious is it to the blessed God, when we rob him of his own perfections that he hath imprinted upon the creature, by loving it, and delighting in it not as in him, but as something distinct from him ! Nay, we are then injurious to ourselves, as we shall see by and by. Labour to enjoy, and to converse with God in the creatures. *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God !* cried David, when he had been meditating of the creature's excellencies,

*Psalm*

*Psalm cxxix. 17.* Labour to abstract your mind from terrene things even in the enjoyment of them, and call upon yourselves to love, and live, and feed upon God in them ; live not upon the dark side of your mercies, but upon the representations of God in them. Is there any thing good ? Oh ! this is a taste of infinite Goodness ! Is there any thing sweet ? Oh ! how sweet is the God that made it so ? Is there any thing lovely ? It is the picture of him whose name is *Love* ! Is any thing firm, stable, lasting ? It is a shadow of that glorious essence, with whom there is no shadow of a change ! Have you any thing strong ? It arises out of that God with whom is *everlasting strength* ! Doth any creature give rest, ease, refreshment ? It springs out of the all-satisfying fulness of God ! In a word, labour to climb up by every created excellency, as by so many beams to the Father of Lights ; let all the world be to you as God's temple, and be ready to say of every place, as Jacob, *How dreadful is this place ! surely this is no other than the house of God* ! That God, who runs through all created beings, and from himself derives several prints of beauty and excellency all the world over. But especially take heed of your own created comforts, that they do not insensibly lead away your hearts, and ensnare you into a sinful, particular, distinct love of them ; which is a sin soon committed, hardly discerned, and most hardly reformed. If any be freed from these inordinate affections, sure they are but few, and those few have come dearly by it ; as he said in another case, *With a great sum they have obtained this freedom, they have paid for it, not with the foreskins of the Philistines,*

Philistines, but with the lives of what they so loved, there being no way to cure this evil temper, but cutting off the member infected with it, the part that it fed upon. As a branch of this head, let me add, labour to *live upon God in the excellencies of other men*; value them and all their accomplishments only in God, as he did, *deligere Deum habitantem in Augustino.* Admire God, and enjoy God in them; where ever you see wisdom, goodness, ingenuity, holiness, justice, or any other accomplishment, say, Here and there is God. And this is the honest way of making ourselves masters of whatever is another man's, and enjoying it as truly as he himself doth, yea, as truly as if it were our own. When we behold all these beams, as coming from the same Fountain of Lights, and do love them all in him with an universal love; this is the rare art of having nothing, yet possessing all things; of being rich, though one have nothing; and of being wise, though one know nothing.

3. The last way of living upon God in the creature, is, *To taste and feed upon the love of God in them*; not only his common bounty, but his special love in Christ. The good will of God gives a sweet relish to every morsel, as I hinted before. Even in the midst of all your delightful, pleasant, sweet enjoyments, let your souls be more affected with this than with them; let this be as the manna upon the top of all your outward comforts, which your spirits may gather up and feed upon. But this I touched upon before, therefore I shall add no more concerning it. Thus I have shewed you how you may imitate the life of angels in living upon

upon God, even whilst you live in the body. To this I may add another particular or two.

3. *Converse with God, and live upon him in all his ordinances.* Let communion with God be your drift in every duty, and the very life, and soul, and sweetness of every ordinance. You never read of a soul more thirsty after ordinances than David, as might appear abundantly ; yet if you look well into the expressions, you will find that it was not so much after them, as after God in them ; not after the dead letter, but after the living God, *Psalm xlvi. 2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God* ; and *Psalm lxxxiv. 2. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* Let the word, preached or read, be as a voice from heaven talking with you ; let your conference be a comment upon that word ; let meditation be as a kind of bringing down God into your souls ; and prayer, as a raising up of your souls unto God ; nothing but faith and love put into phrases ; and so of all the rest.

4. *Converse with God in all his providences, prosperity, adversity, plenty, penury, health, sickness, peace, and perplexity.* This is a large theme ; but as to prosperity, I have spoken something already, under that head of conversing with God in creature-enjoyments. As for adversity, I have said much more in a large discourse, to describe and commend the art of conversing with God in afflictions. Briefly, at this time, converse not with losses, wants, afflictions, but with God in them ; and that not only with the justice, righteousness, severity, and sovereignty of God in them, but with the goodness and mercy of God in them : they are dark providences, we had not need to dwell

dwell on the dark side of them. If all the ways of the Lord towards his people be *mercy and truth*, Psalm xxv. 10. then his roughest and most uncouth ways are so too. If God be wholly love, *1 John iv. 8.* then his very corrections proceed not from hatred. If it is his name to be good, and to do good, *Psalms cxix. 68.* where have we learnt then to call his afflicting providence evils, and to divide evil, which is but one, even as God is one, into *culpa* and *pæna*, sin and affliction ? Surely we speak as men ; and if God calls them so, he speaks after the manner of men, as he often doth. If the governing will of God be pure, perfect, and infinitely good and righteous, ought we not to converse with it in a free and cheerful manner, yea, and to love it too ? In a word, pore not upon creature-changes, nor the uncertain wheels of motion, that are turning up and down, we know not how, nor how oft ; but fix yourselves upon that all-seeing eye, that unbounded understanding, that unsearchable and infinite goodness, that derives itself through the whole universe, and sits in all the wheels of motion, governing all the strange motions of the creatures in a wonderful and powerful manner, and carrying them all in their several orbs to one last and blessed end !

Thus imitate the angelical life, even whilst you are in the body ; converse with God in self-excellencies, in creature-excellencies, ordinances, providences : and yet labour to be more like him still, to abstract your mind from all these, and all material and sensible things, and to converse with God without the help of any creature, I mean in the spirit, and by a secret feeling of his Almighty Goodness, and the energy of grace, and the communications

munications of a divine life in your souls. In a word, if you would taste of heaven whilst you are upon earth, labour above all things for a true conjunction of your hearts with God, in a secret feeling of his goodness, and a reciprocation of love to him; and to find the holy and blessed God exercising his grace and power upon all the faculties of your souls, and rendering them like unto himself; and all these powers of the soul mutually spending themselves upon him freely and entirely, as upon the chief good, which is their proper and full object. Seeing the saints in glory shall be like unto the angels of God, in their way of living in and upon God alone, receive, I pray, this exhortation, which I have so largely prosecuted, and labour to begin that life as far as you can, upon earth. Is there not reason for such an inference? Doth it not now flow naturally from the doctrine? If you think it does not, I will add two or three particulars to strengthen this inference, or, at least, to clear it.

1. It is highly reasonable that we begin to be that which we expect to be for ever, to learn that way of living in which we hope to live to all eternity; so that I infer upon as strong ground as the apostle, *1 John iii. 3. He that hath this hope purifieth himself;* &c.

2. If this be the life of angels, then it is the highest and noblest life that any created being is capable of. As by the *bread of angels* and the *tongue of angels*, the most excellent food and the most excellent language is understood in Scripture; so must we understand this life of angels. Now it is very suitable to the reasonable soul, that immortal, noble being, to aim at the highest and noblest

noblest life. See Matt. xvi. 26. *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

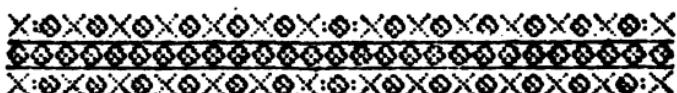
3. This shall not only be our life in heaven, but itself is something of heaven, a beginning of heaven. This life is not a thing really distinct from life eternal, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal,* &c. 1 John v. 13. *Ye have eternal life.* Therefore we read of eternal life abiding in men, and not abiding in them, 1 John iii. 15. So also John vi. 54. *Who so eateth my flesh hath eternal life.* A holy soul thus deified, thus living in and upon God, is as truly glorified upon earth, in some degree, as the world is enlightened by the morning sun; which is as truly, though not so gloriously, as by the sun in its greatest height. Oh! low and ignoble spirits, that can be satisfied with a happiness which shall only be in the world to come! Certainly it is a true and proper speech to say, that a participation of God is an anticipation of heaven; and to be like unto him, is to be with him. You see what reason I have to make such an inference, and to form it into such an earnest exhortation. Oh! therefore, I beseech you, before God and his holy angels, to endeavour to be like him, and live like them! *Object.* Say not, How can men on earth live like angels! *Answ.* 1. But fall on and imitate them, though it be--*baud paffibus æquis;* labour to be righteous, if you cannot be altogether righteous. 2. We are bidden to live the life of God, Matt. v. ult. *Be perfect,* &c. So 1 Pet. i. 15. *Be ye holy,* &c. If I speak high, how high speak these texts? *Obj.* Say not, But how can this animal life permit this? *Answ.* 1. For 1. Thus men have lived in the body. Thus Enoch, Gen. v. 22. Thus lived Paul, Phil. i. 21. Thus

lived *David*, that man after God's own heart, the greatest and most divine character that can be given of a mortal man, *Psalm lxxiii. 25.* *There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* 2. Cannot we live in the body, except we live to the body? You see saints upon earth live above other men upon earth, and yet a little more pains, take the other flight, and you may live above yourselves too, higher than you do. I will only add a motive or two to this duty of living upon God.

1. *The last enemy to be overcome is creature-love.* This is the last enemy that keeps the field, by which alone the greatest sort of men do perish everlasting. Beat down this, and you win the day, and shall wear the crown; nay, the very conquest of it is a crown, as I said before.

2. *To live upon God in the creature, is to enjoy the creature in the best sense.* You will lose nothing of the creature by this means, but shall enjoy it more fully than ever you did. For the creature is ten thousand times sweeter in God, than it is in itself. Yea, in a word, this is the way to enjoy all the world, and to enjoy the accomplishments of all men; and all things as much as if they were your own.

3. *It is the way never to lose anything.* He that lives upon God, spends upon a stock that cannot be wasted, drinks at a fountain that cannot be exhausted. So much as we enjoy of God in the creature, we do not lose with it; and that which we do not so enjoy, we deserve to lose. This then is the secure and honourable life; in comparison of which the life of a prince is but a wallowing in the mire. *Lord, give us evermore this bread, and hearts to feed upon it. Amen.*



DEI ET ANIMÆ CONSORTIUM:  
SIVE  
PERIPHRASTIS IN POSTERIUS  
HEMISTICHIIUM,

I JOHN iv. 18.

—————*W τω Θεω μετει και ο Θεος ει αυτω.*

**O**Mnia mihi Deus est; idem Deus est meus omnis;  
Ipse Deo totus; totus et ipse Dei.

*Omnia mibi Deus est.*

In Deo cujusque boni creati  
Singulæ vires penitissime insunt,  
In Deo solaminaque implicantur  
Omnia vitæ.

*Omnis Deus est meus.*

Omne quod fecit mihi dat benignus;  
Omne quod præ se quia nil pependi,  
Insuper menti dedit appetenti

*Omne quod ipse est.*

*Ipse*

*Ipse in Deo totus,*

**In Deo** versor medio, que spiro,  
**In Deo** grandescere concupisco,  
**Luceo** totus radiis paternâ

Luce receptis.

*Ipse totus Dei.*

Non meî, non alterius creati  
 Sum, (Deus) sed quantus ego, tuus sum :  
 Vita quos à te radios recepi,  
 Oro reflectat !

Cuncta te subter (Deus alme) quæ sunt,  
 Judico mente inferiora nostrâ :  
 Absit ut rebus studeat caducis

Mens genera! .

Fac teipsum, mi Deus, ipsorem  
 Huic meæ menti penitus seipsâ,  
 Fac meipsum, mi Deus, uniorem,  
 Quam mihi tecum !



## G O D   A N D   T H E   S O U L :

O R,

### A   P E R I P H R A S E

U P O N

I JOHN iv. 16.

*dwelleth in God, and God in him:*

**M**Y God is all things unto me ;  
All God is also mine :  
I am, O Lord, wholly in thee,  
And also wholly thine.

*God is all things unto me.*  
The pow'rs of each created good  
In God are all contain'd ;  
In him my comforts all do bud,  
Flourish, and are maintain'd.

*All God is mine.*  
He gave me all that he had made ;  
All which did not suffice  
My larger Soul ; therefore I pray'd,  
He gave himself likewise.

*I am*

*I am wholly in God.*

In th' midst of God I live and breathe,  
In him I'm only bright ;  
The rays with which I shine beneath,  
Are borrow'd from his light.

*I am wholly God's.*

O Lord, I'm not at all my own,  
Nor for another free :  
Let Life be a Reflection  
Of beams receiv'd from thee !

All things below thee, Lord, I judge  
To be below my Soul ;  
O let my nobler Mind e'en grudge  
Itself in Dust to roll !

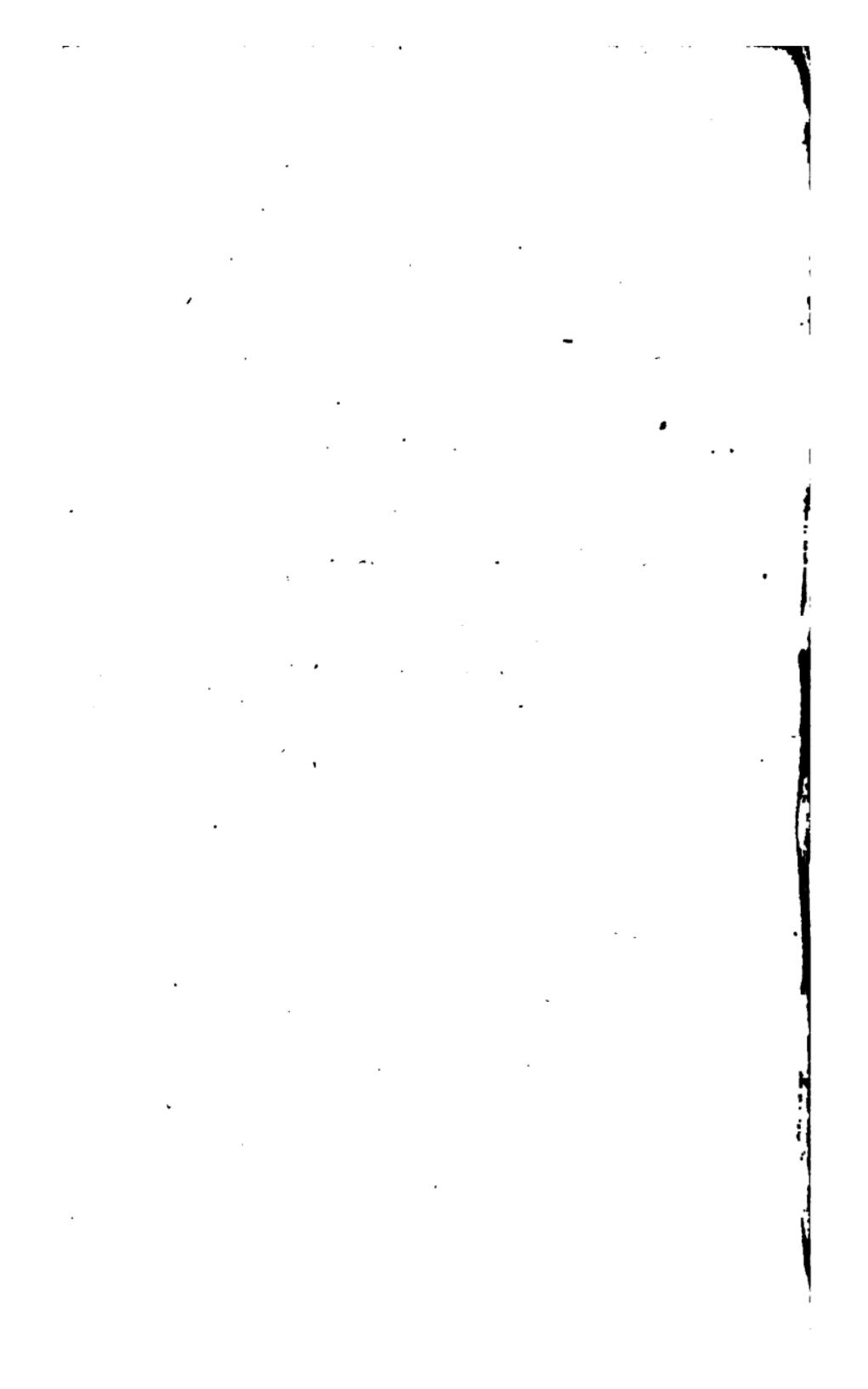
Be more myself, O God, to me  
Than I myself have been ;  
Make me, O God, more one with thee  
Than with myself !

Amen.

F . I . N . I . S .



# **THEOLOGICAL DISSERTATIONS.**



# THEOLOGICAL DISSERTATIONS;

CONTAINING,

- I. The NATURE of the SINAI COVENANT.
- II. The CHARACTER and PRIVILEGES of the APOSTOLIC CHURCHES, with an Examination of Dr. TAYLOR's KEY to the EPISTLES.
- III. The NATURE of SAVING FAITH.
- IV. The LAW of NATURE sufficiently promulgated to the HEATHENS.
- V. An Attempt to promote the frequent dispensing the LORD's SUPPER.

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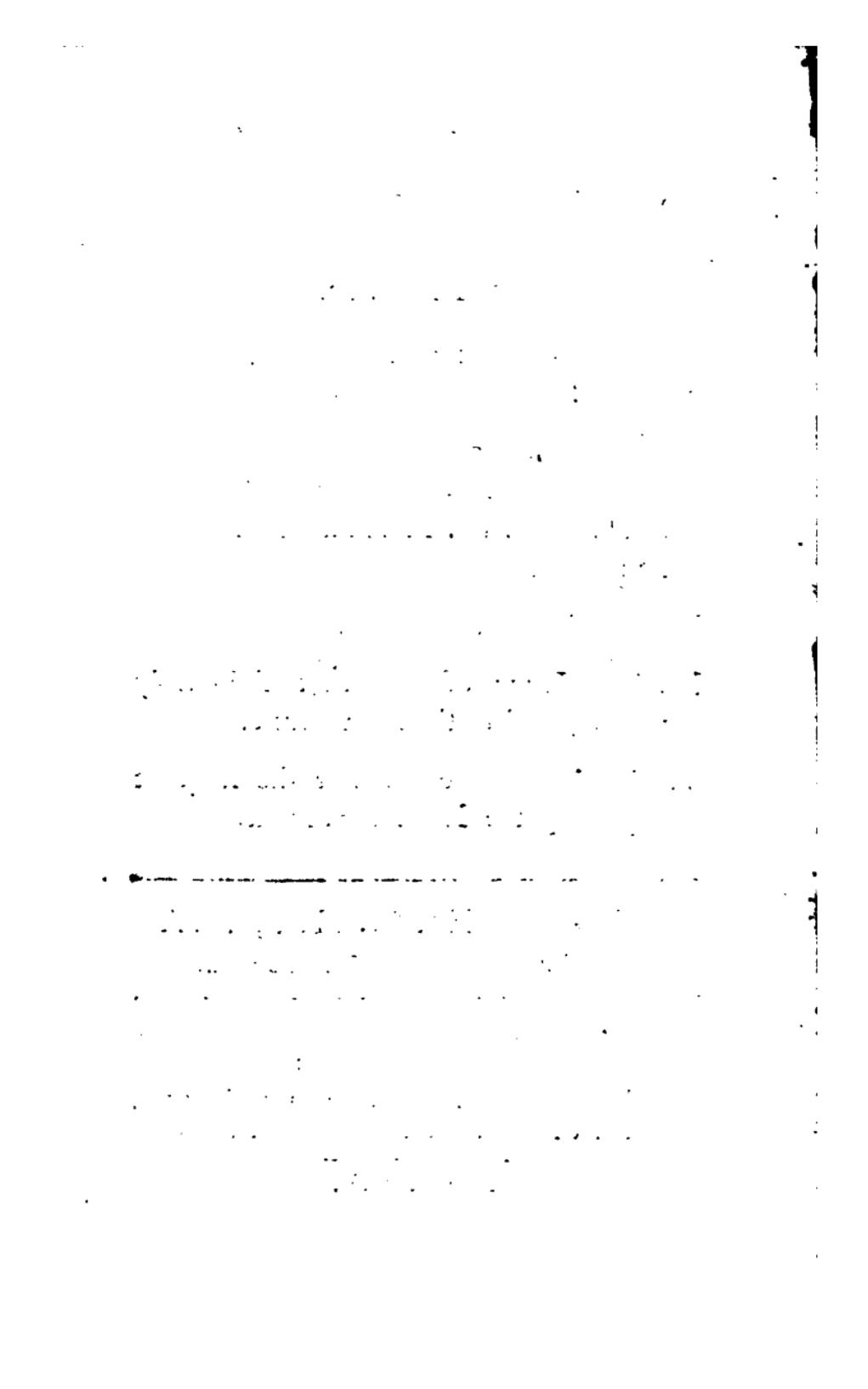
By JOHN ERSKINE, M.A.  
One of the MINISTERS of EDINBURGH.

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MDCCLXV.





## T H E P R E F A C E.

H.E three first of the following Dissertations were never before published. The two last, were printed in Scotland, several years ago.

I flatter myself, they somewhat illustrate the sentiments of Heathen Philosophers ; and the doctrine and worship that have prevailed in different ages of the Christian Church. But they are chiefly intended to explain and defend certain Scriptural Truths, of which I apprehend many entertain false, or at least indistinct ideas,

and yet, which could not have been sufficiently unfolded from the Pulpit, without usurping the place of what was more necessary.

If I have found fault, with certain commonly received opinions, it is not from affection of singularity. The growing disposition in Britain and her Colonies, to renounce many important doctrines maintained by the first Reformers, indicates an approaching Apostacy from the Faith of Christ to another Gospel. Yet, in lesser matters, the best and wisest have erred, and it casts no contempt on their memory, but discovers a becoming reverence for the Sacred Oracles, to try their opinions by that infallible touchstone.

I suppose, it is above thirteen years, since a great part of the Dissertation on the Sinai Covenant, was delivered before the Presbytery of Glasgow. And it is near sixteen years, since the substance of the Dissertation on Faith, was preached before the late Earl of Leven, his Majesty's High Commissioner to the General Assembly. I thought it probable, if my sentiments were unsound,

unsound, or my reasonings weak and inconclusive, that one or other of the many Ministers, who heard me on these occasions, would point it out. That not happening, encourages me now, after so long delay, to venture abroad these sheets. Conscious, how liable I am to judge amiss, I remain open to conviction. If I am chargeable with error, at least I am not chargeable with dark and artful methods to disguise and varnish it over, by saying one thing, when I mean to insinuate quite another.

That Christ, and the benefits of Redemption, were typified by the Law of Moses; and that the spiritual sense of Moses's Law, though veiled from the Jews in common, was in some measure revealed to those mentioned, Heb. xi. I firmly believe. I doubt not, there were many more, whose eyes were opened, under that dark dispensation, to behold wonderous things out of God's Law. Who they were, or how many, Scripture has not determined, and it would be presumptuous to conjecture.

I acknowledge, that hypocrites, whose hypocrisy is unknown, ought to be treated as members of the Christian Church.—I account that faith only saving, which is accompanied with an approbation of the Gospel Scheme of Salvation in all its parts, which leads us to come to God thro' Christ for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, which purifies the heart from immoderate love of the world, and produces an unfeigned respect to all God's Commandments.—I think a divine revelation absolutely necessary, to discover how guilty creatures may emerge from the ruins of their apostacy.—Yet, I cannot see, that confounding faith with its inseparable attendants, or necessary effects, is consistent with the important doctrine of justification by faith only. And infidels, I apprehend, may be greatly hardened in their infidelity, by Christian Divines placing the necessity of revelation on a feeble foundation; while they argue from a fact, which Scripture and Reason concur in contradicting, even this, that the law of nature was not sufficiently promulgated to the Heathens. Others,

thers, who discern not the inconclusiveness of that argument, may be led to forget the grand design of the Gospel, and to mistake it for a re-publication of nature's law.

If my notions of the Jewish and Christian dispensations are just, I gratefully acknowledge, I was first led to them by Bishop Warburton's Divine Legation, and Professor Venema's Dissertations printed at Harlingen 1731. To these learned Writers I would have inscribed the following sheets, were it not, that it might have seemed a pleading their great Names in Patronage of what I have wrote. That I could not justly do. In some particulars I have differed from them. Probably I may have advanced interpretations of Scripture, and improved my sentiments for purposes, which neither of them would chuse to adopt. And had it been otherwise, Reason and Scripture, not human authority, must determine the question, what is Truth.

Attention to Scripture suggested to me the idea of Faith in the third Dissertation. I can cite no uninspired book its support

## P R E F A C E.

port of it. The late President Edwards, in his excellent Treatise on Religious Affections, and some other writers, have indeed laid down principles, from which it may, in my apprehension, be fairly inferred. Yet their ideas of the nature of faith, are so different from mine, that certainly they discerned not that inference. The careless Reader may imagine me favourable to Mr. Sandiman's Hypothesis. But a little reflection will discover a very considerable difference in our sentiments. Mean time, his mistakes about faith are much less offensive, than his discouraging unconverted sinners from using the means of grace in order to conversion, and his harshly censuring Divines as teaching a smooth way to hell, who have clearly asserted those truths, the right belief of which constitutes men Christians.

The general argument of the fourth Dissertation appears to me in the same light, as it did three and twenty years ago, when I first published it. But since that time, I have been fully convinced, that many of the most celebrated Philosophers entertained sentiments

sentiments absolutely inconsistent with the belief of the soul's immortality, and of future rewards and punishments: and have seen considerable cause to suspect that under the devout expressions of the Stoic Philosophers, a system was disguised, nearly allied to that of Spinoza.

I am sorry my distance from the press has occasioned so many typographical errors. Most of them, I hope, will give little disturbance to the attentive and judicious. But I earnestly intreat, that the Reader would at least correct the error in p. 137, which divests my argument of all force, nay makes me assert the very reverse, of what I intended.

EDINBURGH,  
Sept. 1. 1764.

E R.

## E R R A T A.

- Page 8. line 15. for woman read man  
 10. l. 10. for ! read e  
 11. l. 5. from the bottom, for accepting read excepting  
 12. Notes, l. 1. for xiii. read xxxi.  
 46. l. 2. for . read ?  
 49. l. 2. from the bottom, for promises read premisses  
 — Note, for Raat read Raat, and for Berit read Veit  
 54. Note, dele and 5. e. g.  
 72. l. 12. from the bottom, for 13, 60. read 13. LX.  
 80. Notes, l. 3. for 18 read 16  
 82. Notes, l. 2. for Tim. xii. read Tim. iii. 12.  
 84. l. 4. from the bottom, for or read on  
 95. Notes, l. 1. for Milevitonus read Milevitanus  
 96. Notes, l. 5. for 47 read 71  
 97. l. 13. from the bottom, for fecit read facit.  
 99. Notes, l. 2. for Apul. read Apol.  
 — l. 3. for Maynes read Magne  
 100. l. 12, and 13. from the bottom, for imparatas read imparatus  
 101. l. 6. for loti read loti  
 — Notes, l. 1. for Penitentia read Poenitentia — Ibid. l. 6. for  
 Eliberitoni read Eliberitani  
 103. l. 9. after But then, add when the Roman Emperors em-  
     braced Christianity,  
 122. l. 17. for grace to them, he read grace, to them he  
 124. l. 5. from the bottom, for ; read .  
 127. l. 14. from the bottom, for said read are said  
 129. l. 11. from the bottom, for δικαιοσύνη read δίκαιοσύνη — and  
     for δικαιοεύνη read δικαιοεύνη  
 — l. 10. from the bottom, for δικαιοσύνη read δίκαιοσύνη  
 — l. 4. from the bottom, for δικαιοσύνη read δίκαιοσύνη  
 130. l. 18. for John read James  
 135. l. 21. for bribe read gift  
 137. l. 11. from the bottom, for antecedent read consequent  
 138. l. 5. from the bottom, for was read were.  
 177. l. 2. from the bottom, for revelation read salvation  
 180. l. 11. for this read his  
 183. l. 5. from the bottom, for manifested read magnified  
 194. l. 10. for A persuasion of future misery read Dread of  
     threatened punishment  
 194. l. 11. for . read : and dele But  
 237. l. 2. for ; but read . But  
 236. l. 7. for ; but read . But  
 239. l. 14. from the bottom, for nature read water.  
 270. l. 14. for greatly read generally — and for last year read year  
 280. l. 5. for to read of

THEOLO-



# THEOLOGICAL DISSERTATIONS.

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## DISSERTATION I.

*The Nature of the Sinai Covenant, and  
the Character and Privileges of the  
Jewish Church.*

### SECTION I.

§ 1. **T**HE most transient view of the sacred oracles, may convince an impartial enquirer, that the nature and privileges of the Jewish and Christian churches are very different. But to determine how far they are different, is more difficult.

To Israel pertained the covenants, Rom. ix. 4. Not the covenant of grace only, but another, expressly distinguished from it, Jer. xxxi. 31. Heb. viii. 9. Ezek. xvi. 61. in virtue of which, many destitute of inward piety, and no way interested in the covenant of grace, yet had a just title

title to another kind of covenant blessings. A covenant compared, Gal. iv. 22.—24. to Hagar the bond-woman, whose son was excluded a share in the inheritance, cast out of Abraham's family, and obliged to content himself with a servile portion : to intimate that Israel, after the flesh, has no title to the spiritual inheritance, and when the true heir should enter on possession of that inheritance, was to be cast out of God's family.

The opposite nature of the Sinai and Christian covenant, is directly asserted, Heb. viii. 8, 9.  
“ For finding fault with them, he saith, behold  
“ the days come, saith the Lord, when I will  
“ make a new covenant with the house of Israel  
“ and the house of Judah, not according to the  
“ covenant that I made with their fathers, in  
“ the day, when I took them by the hand to lead  
“ them out of the land of Egypt.”

The promise referred to in this passage, cannot relate to the time when the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity. For no new covenant was made with them at that period. It is therefore justly applied by the Apostle to the Christian covenant, which was indeed *new*, not barely in certain accidental circumstances, but in its very essence, so that upon establishing it, the former covenant could no more remain. *Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers.* The Mosaic and Christian covenants are represented as of a nature and properties entirely different. So strong an expression would scarcely have been used, if in the Christian covenant, what was most peculiar to the Mosaic, and characteristical of it, had remained unaltered. The dispensation of grace, which took place under the Mosaic covenant, was no part of it, did not extend

extend to all who were, and did extend to some who were not under it. Therefore a resemblance of that dispensation of grace in what was essential, will not infer a resemblance of the covenant made with the fathers of the Jews. Least by *fathers*, we should understand, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is added, *in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt*. A manifest description of the Sinai or Mosaic covenant, in which God, as monarch of the Jewish nation, promised them a long and prosperous possession of Canaan, on condition of their external obedience, to a variety of laws, precepts, and judgments.

Of this covenant we have the history in the 19th and following chapters of Exodus, and in the 5th chapter of Deuteronomy. It was not dedicated without blood, Exod. xxiv. Heb. ix. 19. and, in establishing it, there was a typical Mediator, even Moses, Gal. iii. 19. The condition of it was obeying, not only the laws promulgated on that memorable day, when God descended upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people, but a variety of burdensome ritual precepts afterwards enacted to punish the idolatry of the golden calf, Heb. viii. 9. Gal. iii. 19; to preserve from the corrupt religion and profligate manners of neighbouring nations; and to typify better things to come under the Messias. In the mean time, these laws, though wisely calculated to restrain from idolatry and other gross sins, could not make perfect as pertaining to the conscience. Obedience to them was never designed to entitle to heavenly and spiritual blessings. These last are only to be looked for through another

other and a better covenant, established upon better promises.

If any enquire whether the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works or of grace; I reply, it was neither, in the sense in which systematic divines, generally use these terms: but a mixed covenant, partaking of the nature of both. God's loving the Jews above other nations, taking them into covenant with himself, and appointing sacrifices to expiate sins which would otherwise have been a breach of this covenant, were all owing to free unmerited goodness. Not to observe that the Mosaic covenant had a respect to the covenant of grace as typified by it. But then the burdensome servile obedience it enjoined, was to be performed by the Jews without any special divine assistance, and was to found their legal title to covenant blessings.

But without regarding systematic ideas, let us examine the Scripture account of the Mosaic covenant, and particularly of the parties covenanting, the good things promised, and the condition on which the bestowing them was suspended.

§ 2. That God was one of the parties, in the Mosaic covenant, is universally acknowledged. It is, however, necessary to observe, that God entered into that covenant, under the character of King of Israel. He is termed so in Scripture: (a) and he acted as such, disposed of offices, made war and peace, exacted tribute, enacted laws, punished with death such of that people as refused him allegiance and defended his subjects from their enemies.

God, as husband of the gospel church, claims from his people inward affection and love, and

(a) Judg. viii. 23. 1 Sam. viii. 7. xii. 12.

accepts

accepts them only who worship him in spirit and in truth. In the Mosaic covenant it was otherwise. There he appeared chiefly as a temporal prince, and therefore gave laws intended rather to direct the outward conduct, than to regulate the actions of the heart. Hence every thing in that dispensation was adapted to strike his subjects with awe and reverence. The magnificence of his palace, and all its utensils; his numerous train of attendants; the splendid robes of the high priest, who, though his prime minister, was not allowed to enter the holy of holies, save once a year, and, in all his ministrations; was obliged to discover the most humble veneration for Israel's king; the solemn rites, with which the priests were consecrated; the strictness with which all impurities and indecencies were forbidden, as things, which, though tolerable in others (*b*), were unbecoming the dignity of the people of God (*c*), especially when approaching to him: all these tended to promote and secure the respect due to their glorious sovereign. On the same account, a distinction was preserved between the table of the prince and of the subjects. The subjects were not allowed to eat the fat and the blood (*d*), these being proper to God's altar, and leaven and honey, the common food of the Israelites, though consecrated to God, were not to be burnt on the altar, but eaten by the priests.

The sabbath, the feasts of passover, pentecost and tabernacles, the preserving the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that blossomed, and the consecration of the first-born to God, were all commemorations of outward benefits, received from

(*b*) Deut. xiv. 21. (*c*) Levit. xi, 43, 44. Deut. xiv. 1,—3. xxiii. 10,—14. (*d*) Lev. iii. 17.

the exercise of God's kingly power. The tithes were properly tribute paid him. Their thank-offerings of beasts, wheat, barley, wine, oil, &c. were acknowledgments that they owed these blessings to his bounty. To conclude this argument, the fidelity and allegiance of the Jews was secured, not by bestowing the influences of the spirit necessary to produce faith and love, (a) but barely by external displays of majesty and greatness, calculated to promote a slavish subjection, rather than a cheerful filial obedience.

For this reason it is foretold, Hos. ii. 16. that in gospel times men should not call God Baali, i. e. my master, but Ishi, i. e. my husband. Indeed God was a husband to the Jewish church, (b) and he is to the Christian church a Master and Lord (c). But the passage imports at least thus much, that God, who in the Jewish dispensation had chiefly displayed the grandeur, distance, and severity of a Master, would, in the Christian dispensation, chiefly display the affection and familiarity of a husband and friend.

§ 3. The party, with whom God made this covenant, was the Jewish nation, not excluding these unregenerate, and inwardly disaffected to God and goodness. In the original records of the Sinai covenant (d), all the people are expressly said to enter into it, and yet the greater part of that people, were strangers to the enlightening and converting influences of the spirit, and to a principle of inward love to God and holiness (e). The least acquaintance with the history of the Jews, and even of that genera-

(a) Deut. xxix. 3, 4. (b) Jer. xxxi. 32. (c) Mat. xxiii. 8. (d) Exod. xix. 8. xxiv. 3. Deut. v. 1,—3.  
(e) Deut. xxix. 3. v. 29.

tion,

tion, which came out of Egypt, and with whom the Sinai covenant was first established (*a*), may satisfy us, how rare a thing true religion was among them. Indeed, had they been blessed with deliverance from the dominion of sin, and with conformity to the image of God, it would be absolutely unaccountable, that when urged to obedience, this more excellent blessing should be wholly overlooked ; and their deliverance from Egypt represented as the chief thing, whereby God had become their God, and laid them under obligations to walk in his statutes (*b*).

On account of the perverse obstinate disposition of God's antient covenant people, Hoseah is commanded, to take unto him a wife of whoredoms, i. e. one, who, though then a virgin, was of a lascivious disposition, and would break her marriage vow : and to love a woman, beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, i. e. one who would repay her husband's fondness and affection with adulterous treachery (*c*). For the same reason, the Sinai covenant is compared to a prison (*d*), in which subjects disaffected to their prince, are shut up to prevent their rebelling, and to a school-master (*e*), by whose authority children are restrained from sins and follies, to which their natural disposition would otherwise carry them. And those under the Sinai covenant, are represented as groaning under a yoke (*f*).

- (*a*) Jer. xxxi. 32. Ezek. xx. 10, 11. (*b*) Ex. xix. 4. xx. 2. xxix. 46. Lev. xi. 45. xix. 36. xxii. 33. xxv. 38, 42, 55. Numb. xv. 41. Deut. iv. 20, 34. 2 Sam. vii. 23. Hol. xii. 9. (*c*) Hos. i. 2. iii. 1. (*d*) Gal. iii. 23. (*e*) Ibid. ver. 24. (*f*) Is. ix. 3. lvi. 2.

Further, the Sinai covenant was made, not only with those who came out of Egypt, but with all succeeding generations that were to spring from them (*a*). Descent from Israel gave any one a title to the benefits of this covenant, for which reason the children even of unregenerate Israelites, were circumcised the eighth day, and were said to be born unto God (*b*). It was this that led the Jews, in our Lord's days, to boast so much of their descent from Abraham (*c*). And probably it was to allay this pride in Nicodemus, that our Lord tells him he must be born again; as he speaks of the water of life to the Samaritan woman who boasted of Jacob's well; and to the rich young ~~man~~ of treasures in heaven. Hence Paul tells us, that he had, *whereof he might trust in the flesh*, i. e. esteemed himself entitled to the carnal benefits of the Sinai covenant, seeing he was *of the stock of Israel*, and *an Hebrew of the Hebrews* (*d*). Now this plainly supposes, that all of the stock of Israel were interested in that covenant. Nay, these adopted by a Jew, born in his house, or bought with his money, were circumcised, as a token that they were entitled to the same benefits (*e*). Proselytes too, in virtue of their own deed, had the same claim: and the children of proselytes, though circumcised at an age, when incapable of knowing what was done to them, had a like claim through the deed and will of their parents. Sons of God under that typical dispensation were *born of blood*, i. e. lawful wedlock; or *of the will of the flesh*, i. e. of uncleanness, as Pharez from the

(*a*) Deut. xxix. 14, 15. (*b*) Ezek. xvi. 20. (*c*) Mat. iii. 9. John viii. 33. (*d*) Phil. iii. 4, 5. (*e*) Gen. xvii. 12, 13. Selden de Jur. Nat. & Gent. l. 5. c. 12.

incest

incest of Judah and Thamar; or from the will of men, i. e. became sons of God, by their own deed, or by the deed of their parents, masters or adopters. The difference of the Christian dispensation from the Sinai covenant, in these respects, is hinted, John i. 13. and 1 Peter i. 23. and in that celebrated expression of Tertullian, *Christiani sunt, non nascuntur.* It needs no proof, that men might be interested in the blessings of the Sinai covenant, in any of the ways mentioned above, and yet notwithstanding be slaves of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins.

When God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, circumcision was instituted for this among other purposes, to shew that descent from Abraham was the foundation of his posterities right to these blessings. But, in gospel times, when not the children of the flesh, but the children of the promise are counted for a seed, Rom. ix. 8. in consequence of this the circumcision of the flesh is of no more avail, and the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ becomes necessary, Col. ii. 11. Rom. ii. 28. The promise of long life, in the land of Canaan, was therefore annexed with peculiar propriety to the precept of honouring father and mother, to remind the Jews that they owed the possession of that land to the piety of their more distant forefathers, gratitude to whom would be best testified by a dutiful behaviour to their immediate parents who now represented them.

Had not God known, that the greater part of these, with whom he entered into covenant at Sinai, were an obstinate, stiff-necked, and hard-hearted

10 *Theological Dissertations.*

hearted generation, there would have been no occasion for permitting polygamy and divorce, and allowing the avenger of blood to kill the manslayer. These laws evidently suppose their corruption, and connive at it, in so far as to free it from temporal punishment.

The spiritual covenant-relation, between God and true believers, can never be dissolved (*a*). These then interested in the Sinai covenant were not true believers; for they are charged with spiritual whoredom and adultery, and with breaking the covenant like Adam (*b*), and God is said to give them a bill of divorce, and put them away (*c*).

§ 4. But it will more clearly appear, who were interested in the Sinai covenant, by considering, who were allowed to partake of the seals of it. Now circumcision belonging to all the Jews in common, the Sinai covenant, of which it was a seal, must belong to them too. Circumcision, I acknowledge was also a seal of the righteousness of faith. But it was not so to all who received it. As derived from Abraham, it was to all who imitated his faith a seal of the covenant of grace: as inserted in the ceremonial law a seal of the Sinai covenant. Or rather, it was to Abraham, a seal both of an external and spiritual covenant. And therefore, even to these, who were only interested in the external covenant; it was of use.

As all the seed of Jacob were circumcised, so none of them were excluded for want of inward holiness, from the passover and other federal

(*a*) Jer. xxxi. 32, 33. xxxii. 40. Is. lv. 3. (*b*) Jer. xxxi. 32. Hos. vi. 7. (*c*) Isa. l. 1, 2. Jer. iii. 8. Hos. ix. 15.

rites of the Jewish church. Bad men might therefore be then in covenant with God : for God would not have permitted any, to partake of the seals of a covenant, in which they were no ways interested. Every one that was not ceremonially unclean, or on a journey, and forebore to keep the passover, was to be cut off by death from God's people (*a*). Depravity of heart, or wickedness of life, did not exempt from this obligation. And even these, who being unclean by reason of a dead body, or in a journey afar off, could not solemnize the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, were required to do it, on the fourteenth day of the second month. So that, on one or other of these days, every Israelite whatsoever was bound to solemnize it. And therefore, though Christ had told his disciples, that one of their number had a devil, they don't desire him to point out the guilty person, which, doubtless, they would have done, had an immoral character, as much unfitted, as ceremonial uncleanness for eating the passover.

Three times a year, even at the feasts of unleavened bread, of harvest, and of ingathering, all the males of Israel, were required to appear before the Lord (*b*). The Jewish Rabbies mention eleven classes of persons, whom this precept did not bind, as the blind, lame, &c. but instead of excepting men of wicked hearts and lives, they expressly tell us, that all, save these eleven classes, were bound by that precept (*c*).

Every seventh year, at the feast of tabernacles, all Israel, man, woman, and child, were bound

(*a*) Num. ix. 13.      (*b*) Maimonides tit. Chagig., c. 2. apud Selden de Synedr. Vet. Heb. l. 1. c. 7..  
(*c*) Ibid.

to appear before the Lord (*a*). And the Jewish doctors, do not except from this precept excommunicate or immoral persons (*b*).

Agreeably to this, we no where read, that either prince, or priest, or prophet, excluded any person on account of moral pollution, from sacrifices, from the passover, or from other federal rites and solemnities. Nay, Josiah, that pious prince, commanded all the people in common to keep the passover to the Lord God (*c*), though he knew too much of their idolatries and other wickednesses in the reign of his predecessor, to imagine that the hearts of all his subjects were right with God, and sincerely devoted to his service. No rebukes however are given to the princes or priests on that account, in the writings of the prophets, which doubtless would have been done, had their conduct in this particular been blame-worthy. But the prophets well knew, that man could have no right to preclude any from that, which the law of God allowed, them, I should rather have said, under the severest penalties enjoined upon them.

The Sadducees were men of the most dangerous principles and abandoned lives. Yet they were allowed to sacrifice and partake of the passover. Nay, some of them were advanced to the high priesthood. The Pharisees, their mortal enemies, saw this, without ever opposing it as unlawful. So sensible were they, that the law of Moses afforded them no handle for such an opposition.

31.

XXXI

(*a*) Deut. 26. 10,—12.      (*b*) Maimonides tit.  
Chagiga, c. 3. apud Selden, l. c.      (*c*) 2 Kings  
xxiii. 21.

The Pharisees were mightily offended at our Lord, for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, and would have esteemed themselves blame-worthy, had they done it (*a*). Yet the self-righteous Pharisee and immoral Publican go together to the temple-worship, and the former does not look upon himself as defiled by the presence of the latter (*b*). Persons ceremonially impure polluted any garment they touched, or any place they entered. Moral impurity had no such effect, else adulteresses would not have been brought into a place so holy as the temple (*c*).

Our Lord and his apostles were accounted, both by Pharisees and Saducees, as the vilest of men, the filth of the earth, and the off-scourings of all things. Yet no attempt was made to debar them from the sacrifices or sacraments of the Jewish church. Doubtless, the malice of their enemies would have prompted them to have inflicted that censure, had it been ever inflicted for error or vice. But they, who blamed our Lord for eating with unwashen hands, did not blame him for entering the temple, and partaking of the passover. And they who were angry with Paul, for bringing Greeks into the temple, express no displeasure at him for entering it himself.

Our Lord, who knew the unbelief of his brethren, and their worldly carnal disposition, would not have bid them go up to the feast of tabernacles, John vii. 5,—8. if the obligation to attend that solemnity, had reached only to the regenerate.

Hezekiah's not observing the passover the first month, because the priests had not sanctified

(*a*) Mat. ix. 11.    (*b*) Luke xviii. 10.    (*c*) Num. v. John viii. 2, 3.

them-

themselves sufficiently (*a*), is no proof that inward holiness was necessary to qualify for that solemnity. For sanctified, in that history, means no more than free from ceremonial uncleanness, which many bad men might, and many good men might not be.

It is readily acknowledged, that men of bad lives, at least after the return from the Babylonish captivity, were excommunicated and thrust out of the synagogues. But it should be remembered, these synagogues were only private societies of a late original, and persons thrust out of them still had access to the temple-worship. Excommunication precluded men from certain private devotional exercises, and from free and familiar intercourse with their brethren. It deprived of certain marks of honour and respect, and probably was attended with something of positive disgrace. And therefore, some of the chief rulers were afraid to confess Christ, least they should be put out of the synagogue, because they loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God (*b*). One circumstance of disgrace was, that excommunicate persons entered the temple, and went out of it, at a different gate from others. Yet still they had an undoubted right to sacrifice and partake of the passover, just as the Essenes had, who sacrificed in a part of the temple separate from the rest of the Jews (*c*). Whatever therefore were the effects of excommunication, exclusion from any public exercise of worship, could be none of them. The history of our Lord and his apostles is a demonstration of this. The Jews had decreed to excommunicate any who should confess Jesus to be the Christ (*d*):

(*a*) 2 Chron. xxx. 3.  
(*c*) Selden ubi supra.

(*b*) John xii. 42, 43.  
(*d*) John ix. 22.

They

They passed that sentence against the blind man whose sight Christ had restored (*a*), and doubtless against many, if not all others in like circumstances. For Christ warns his disciples to expect this sentence (*b*), and the fear of it prevented many from professing their faith in him (*c*). Yet all this notwithstanding, the apostles of Christ, and thousands of believing Jews zealous of the law (*d*), had as free access to the temple for public exercises of devotion, as the infidel Jews had (*e*). Nor did their bitterest enemies ever accuse them, or contend with them on that account, which they would undoubtedly have done, if excommunication had deprived them of all title to the public solemnities of the Jewish worship.

§ 5. But, if this reasoning proves any thing, will it not prove, that a God of spotless purity, can enter into a friendly treaty with men, whom yet, on account of their sins, he utterly abhors? And what if it does? Perhaps, the assertion, however shocking at first view, may, on a narrower scrutiny, be found innocent. We assert not any inward eternal friendship between God and the unconverted Jews. We only assert an external temporal covenant, which, though it secured their outward prosperity, gave them no claim to God's special favour. Where then is the alledged absurdity? Will you say it is unworthy of God to maintain external communion with sinners, or to impart to them any blessings? What then would become of the bulk of mankind? Nay, what would become of the patience

(*a*) John ix. 34.      (*b*) Jo. xvi. 2.      (*c*) Jo. xii. 42.      (*d*) Acts xxi. 20.      (*e*) Acts ii. 46, xxi. 26.

and

and long-suffering of God? Or is it absurd, that God should reward actions that flow from bad motives: when we have an undoubted instance of his doing this in the case of Jehu? Or is it absurd, that God should entail favours on bad men, in the way of promise or covenant? Have you forgot God's promise to Jehu, that his children of the fourth generation should sit on the throne of Israel? Or, have you forgot, what concerns you more, God's covenant with mankind in general, no more to destroy the earth by a flood (*a*)? I would only add, that the spiritual promise made to Abraham, was not made void by the Sinai covenant (*b*). If the greater part did not secure an interest in that promise, the fault was their own. God, notwithstanding, for his love to their fathers, and for other wise and good reasons, allowed them the benefit of the external covenant. If you plead, that God can have no intercourse with sinners without sacrifices and without a Mediator: I reply, the Sinai covenant was founded on sacrifices (*c*), and had a Mediator, even Moses (*d*). And in an outward and typical covenant securing temporal prosperity, so great a display of the divine holiness was not necessary, as in a covenant securing an interest in God's special loving-kindness. Therefore a Mediator and sacrifices of less value sufficed for the former. A typical Mediator and typical sacrifices, were most suitable to a typical covenant.

§ 6. But why were those, with whom God entered into covenant at mount Sinai, so often

(*a*) 2 Kings x. 30. Gen. ix. 12.      (*b*) Gal. iii. 17.      (*c*) Heb. ix. 18,—20.      (*d*) Gal. iii. 19.

termed

termed a holy people to the Lord, if the greater part of them were in heart disaffected to God and his service? The question is not without its difficulty, and the answering it will require some time and pains. Let it then be observed, that men are said to be sanctified or made holy in very different senses. Sanctification, for the distinction, though an old is not a bad one, is either real or relative. Real sanctification is either inward, consisting of holiness of heart and life, or outward, consisting in external washings and purifications, and a behaviour free from grosser sins. Relative sanctification consists, in separation from common use, and a special relation to God, and spiritual things: to God, when any thing is used as an external symbol of his presence, or is employed in his immediate service; or in some use to which God has devoted it; to spiritual things, when something not spiritual is a type and figure of them. On this account, that also is termed unclean, which is a type or emblem of moral impurities (a).

Though then the unconverted Jews, had not that holiness, which results from moral excellency, or from the graces of the spirit: yet they had a holiness, consisting in separation from other nations (b); in legal washings and purifications, and abstinence from whatever ceremonially defiled (c); in freedom from idolatry, and other gross vices, absolutely destructive to a society, of which God was king (d); in external dedication to God and his service, and the outward symbols of God's presence among them (e); and in their typifying the

(a) Mede Diff. 1. c. 5. (b) Ezra ix. 2. (c) Exod. xxii. 31. Lev. xi. 43, 44. xx. 25, 26. Deut. xiv. 1, —3. (d) Lev. xx. 6, 7. (e) Exod. xxix. 43, 44.

Messias and his kingdom, and preparing things for his birth and appearance.

The holiness of the priests was barely external and relative. Inward impurities did not unfit them for their office (*a*). The same might be observed as to the holiness of the Levites, of the first-born, and of the Nazarites. Therefore, the holiness of the Jewish nation, which was inferior in degree to the holiness of these, is external and relative also. To intimate this, the Israelites are termed a kingdom of priests, as well as a holy nation (*b*). And indeed, in killing the paschal lamb, every head of a family acted as a priest.

That separation from other nations, in which the holiness of the Jews chiefly consisted (*c*), was not spiritual, resulting from rectitude of heart and a correspondent behaviour; but barely external, resulting from certain sacred rites and ceremonies different from or opposite to those of other nations, and confined to certain places and persons (*d*). The middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, was the ceremonial law (*e*), which was neither necessary nor fit to make a spiritual separation. In fact, it did not separate between good and bad men among the Jews: but between the house of Israel, and the fearers of God or devout persons in the heathen nations (*f*). For which reason, though Cornelius was one that feared God, gave much alms, and prayed to God always, Peter was afraid of being polluted by intercourse with him.

- (*a*) Lev. xxi.    (*b*) Exod. xix. 6.    (*c*) Exod. xix. 5, 6. Num. xxiii. 9. Deut. xxvi. 18, 19.    (*d*) Lev. xx. 24,—26. Deut. xiv. 21.    (*e*) Eph. ii. 14, 15.    (*f*) Psal. cxviii. 4. Acts xiii. 16, 26. xvii. 4, 17.

A par-

A particular detail of the reasons, of these ceremonial observances, whereby Israel was separated from other nations, would lead me too far from my subject. Some of them were intended, as has been observed § 2, to preserve the respect due to God as King of the Jews. Others, to prepare things for the coming of the Messias, and to keep that nation and family from which he was to descend distinct from all others; that so it might be evident, he was born of the tribe and family, and in the place, which the Old Testament prophecies had foretold. For this purpose the Jews were forbid to intermarry with the heathen (*a*): the jubilee was instituted, at which time every family had its old inheritance restored to it, genealogies were kept with great exactness to preserve the distinction of tribes and families; adultery, and other vices, that tended to confound that distinction, were severely punished: and because the genealogies of the royal family used to be most accurately observed, the royalty was annexed to the particular tribe and family, from which the Messias was to arise.—Other ritual laws were intended to promote the real external sanctification of the Israelites; to train them up to decency of behaviour; to preserve them from idolatry and other gross vices of the heathen, destructive of society in general, or inconsistent with their owning God as their Prince, and to inure them to humanity and other social virtues. This is expressly mentioned as the cause of some laws (*b*); and, in other laws, it is evident from the reason of the thing. Thus the prohibitions of sowing a field with mingled seed,

(*a*) Ezra ix. 10. Neh. xiii. 25. (b) Lev. xviii. 3, 24. Numb. xv. 39. Deut. xii. 2. xiv. 1, 2. and

and wearing garments mingled with linen and woollen (*a*), though they were to be observed in the literal sense, seem mainly intended to discourage the joining the worship of idols with the worship of the true God, the intermarrying with heathens, and, above all, unnatural ways of gratifying lust. The scorching a kid in his mother's milk (*b*), the killing a cow or ew and their young in one day (*c*), and the taking the dam and her young at once (*d*), were forbid in order to encourage mercy and humanity. And therefore the lack of these precepts is backed with this reason, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days (*e*). The moral intention of the precept against muzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn (*f*), is pointed out by Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 9, 10. The forbidding the price of a dog to be brought into the house of the Lord, was probably intended to discourage impudence and uncleanness, as it is at the same time forbidden to bring there the hire of a whore (*g*).—Some laws might be necessary, in the climate where Judea lay, to preserve cleanliness, and thereby the health of the inhabitants.—In some rites God might accommodate himself, as far as was fit, to the dispositions and inclinations of his subjects, by adopting into the Jewish ritual, ceremonies to which they had been accustomed, and for which they had contracted a fondness, when in Egypt. At the same time, that the admitting among them some ceremonies of this kind, might not facilitate the entrance of idolatry, a variety

- (*a*) Lev. xix. 19. Deut. xxii. 9,—21. (*b*) Exod. xxiii. 19. (*c*) Lev. xxii. 28. (*d*) Deut. xxii. 6, 7. (*e*) Ibid. (*f*) Deut. xxv. 4. (*g*) Deut. xxiii. 18.

of

of rites were wisely prescribed, diametrically opposite to these of Egypt and other idolatrous nations.—As things difficultly obtained are most valued and desired, it is not improbable, that the reason why such a multitude of legal pollutions, unfitted for the service of the temple, might be, to increase the reverence and affection of the Jews for that service.—Lastly, almost every part of the ceremonial law, besides its other purposes, was intended to typify either the Messias, or the characters of the subjects of his kingdom, or the blessings of the Christian dispensation. And here I cannot forbear transcribing an observation of the learned Bishop Warburton's Divine Legislation, B. 4. Section 6. “An imitation of a body of rites, particularly and minutely levelled against, and referring to the idolatrous practices of these ages; and, at the same time, as minutely typical, not only of all the remarkable transactions under that dispensation, but likewise of all the great and constituent parts of a future one, to arise in a distant age, and of a genius directly opposite, must needs give an attentive considerer the most amazing idea of divine wisdom.”

And thus I am brought back to my subject, and led to observe, that as things were termed unclean, which were types or emblems of moral impurity, so the Jews were termed holy, not only because they were separated from other nations, but because they typified real Christians, who are in the fullest and noblest sense a holy nation, and a peculiar people (*a*). Types are visible things, different in their nature, from the spiritual things which they typify. If then the Jew-

(*a*) 1 Pet. ii. 9.

ish dispensation was typical, we may safely conclude, that the holiness of the Jewish nation being intended to typify the holiness of the Christian church, was of a different nature from it. And it is for this reason, that the Jewish dispensation is called the flesh and the letter, because persons and things in that dispensation, typified and represented persons and things under a more spiritual dispensation.

## S E C T I O N II.

§ 1. IT is easy to see, from what has been observed in the preceeding section, that the blessings of the Sinai covenant are merely temporal and outward.

God in that covenant acted as a temporal monarch. And from a temporal monarch, temporal prosperity is all that we hope, not spiritual blessings, such as righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The Jews were treated in that covenant as children and slaves, Gal. iv. 1, 24. v. 1. Rom. viii. 15. Heb. ii. 15. Imaginary blessings are well adapted to please children, and the expectations of a slave reach not to intimate friendship with his master, but are confined to a paltry hire.

We are informed, Luke xvii. 7,—10. how God deals with a hired servant. Though he performs the servile work for which he was hired, he is not to look for any mark of affection and respect from his master, seeing it was only for hire that he served him. A fit emblem of the Sinai covenant, in which the Jews were hired by the prosperous possession of the land of Canaan, to perform

perform a variety of slavish, burdensome services. If they did the work, they were only to expect the wages. They had no claim to special intercourse with God, and the peculiar tokens of his favour, seeing they were destitute of faith, the necessity of which our Lord had asserted, ver. 6. and introduced this similitude to illustrate. After having done all the things commanded them, as they merit no reward, so they don't receive it. They are unprofitable servants, and are treated as such. Their Master saith not to them, go sit down to meat : but make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me. How different a representation do the sacred oracles give of the honour and happiness of true Christians ? Though none of them ever did the thousandth part of his duty ; and though the best of them could not be profitable to their Maker : yet their good works are represented as glorifying to God, profitable to society, and useful to themselves (a). God calls them not servants, as the Jews were called, but sons and friends (b). And, when their work is over, instead of sitting down at table, and commanding them to serve him, such is his boundless condescension and love, that he girds himself, makes them to sit down at meat, and comes forth and serves them (c).

If any plead, that our Lord's similitude of a hired servant refers to the law of nature : I acknowledge, that by the law of nature, one who perfectly loves God, and obeys his commands, and has never in the least instance, by thought, word or action, transgressed any of them, has no

(a) Matth. x. 41, 42. Ephes. vi. 8. Phil. i. 11.  
Philem. xi. (b) John xv. 15. Gal. iv. 7. (c) Luke  
xii. 37.

claim to the heavenly inheritance, from the intrinsic merit of his obedience. However, from the goodness of God, and his love to holiness, we have no reason to doubt, that upon such a one the heavenly inheritance would be bestowed. Neither the law of nature, nor the covenant of grace, but the Sinai covenant alone, placed men in the relation of mercenary slaves.

On this account, the prophet Hoseah's wife, who represented those under the Sinai covenant, was bought with fifteen pieces of silver, and an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley (a). And the elder brother, in the parable of the prodigal, who also represents the Jewish church, had none of those marks of special affection given him, that were vouchsafed to the returning prodigal (b).

§ 2. But it is proper to mention some more direct and unquestionable proofs, that the blessings of the Sinai covenant were merely outward.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt, which was as it were the foundation of the Sinai covenant, was only an outward redemption. Is it then reasonable to suppose, that the blessings founded upon it were spiritual and heavenly ?

Read attentively, and without prejudice, Moses's account of the Sinai covenant. There you will find, that the chief promises of it were, that the Israelites should, with little difficulty, subdue the mighty nations of Canaan ; that they should enjoy a long, quiet, and peaceable possession of that country, under the divine protection ; that their land should abound with corn and wine, milk and honey, and every thing else necessary for their outward prosperity ; that they should be

(a) Hosea iii. 2.

(b) Luke xv. 11,—32.

preserved from famine, pestilence, and the other plagues and diseases, that God had inflicted on Egypt ; that God would multiply them as the sands of the sea, and as the stars of heaven ; that he would give them victory over their enemies ; and place among them the external symbols of his presence. The passages of Scripture to this purpose, are so many and long, that it would too much swell these sheets to transcribe them. The few referred to below (t), ought to be carefully consulted. It is evident, that these passages are intended to enumerate the advantages of the Sinai covenant : and yet, that all the blessings mentioned in them are merely external, and have no necessary connection with the special favour of God and eternal life. Nor is this all. Scripture expressly asserts, that God, by bestowing such temporal blessings, fulfils his engagements in the Sinai covenant, Deut. vii. 12,—15. “ Wherefore, it shall come to pass, if ye hear—  
“ ken to these judgments, and keep, and do  
“ them : that the Lord thy God shall keep unto  
“ thee the covenant, and mercy, which he swore  
“ to thy fathers.” Would you know, how it  
shall appear, that God hath kept his covenant ? What follows, will inform you. “ And he will  
“ love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee ;  
“ he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and  
“ the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine,  
“ and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and  
“ the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he  
“ swore unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou  
“ shalt be blessed above all people. There shall

(t) Exod. xv. 25, 26. xxiii. 25,—28. Lev. xxvi. 3,  
—14. Deut. vii. 12,—24. viii. 7,—9. xi. 13,—17.  
xxviii. 3,—13.

" not be male or female barren among you or  
 " among your cattle. And the Lord will take  
 " away from thee all sickness, and will put none  
 " of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou  
 " knowest, upon thee ; but will lay them upon  
 " all them that hate thee." See also Lev. xxvi.

9, 10.

The punishments threatened against idolatry and other gross breaches of the Sinai covenant, were also temporal, such as diseases, unsuccessful war, famine, pestilence, casting out of the land of Canaan, spiting that land with a preternatural barrenness, and scattering its old inhabitants among the heathen. The Scriptures cited below, are a sufficient proof of this (u).

There are however who plead, that the virtue of individuals was secured under the Old Testament, precisely as it is under the New, by promises of spiritual and eternal, not of temporal blessings : that the sanctions of the Sinai covenant only regarded Israel as a nation : and even, in that respect, had little in them peculiar to that people, because nations subsist only in this life, and therefore the justice of God requires, that in this life they should be rewarded or punished.

That the justice of God in such an immediate manner rewards and punishes nations, can neither be proved by reason nor Scripture. Men have been led to fancy this necessary, by a train of thin-spun metaphysical abstractions, though every day's experience might have convinced them of their mistake. Virtue indeed tends to promote the prosperity of nations, and vice to occasion their misery and destruction. But acci-

(u) Lev. xxvi. 14,—39. Deut. iv. 25,—27. xi. 17.  
 xxviii. 15,—68. xxix. 22,—48.

dental circumstances may greatly retard the effect of that tendency, so that it is seldom kingdoms flourish or decay in exact proportion to their moral character. Mean time the honour of divine justice is abundantly secured, if the individuals, who compose a nation, are finally rewarded or punished according to their respective merit. It was therefore peculiar to the Jews, that their prosperity or misery, as a nation, wholly depended on their observance or neglect of the Mosaic law.

Yet there was another peculiarity in the Jewish dispensation, equally surprizing. The temporal happiness, even of individuals, depended in like manner, on their obedience or disobedience to the laws of God. God expressly threatened, that "he would set his face against that man, cut him off, and destroy him from among his people, that eat any manner of blood; that gave any of his seed to Moloch, or connived at one guilty of that crime; that turned after familiar spirits and wizards; or that did any work on the day of atonement," Lev. xvii. 10. xx. 2, —6. xxiii. 30. These expressions plainly imply, that the immediate vengeance of God would inflict death on such transgressors, when their crimes were unknown to earthly judges, or connived at by them. We are told, Exod. xx. 7. that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless," i. e. will certainly and severely punish him, "that taketh his name in vain." And Exod. xxxii. 32, 33. that "the Lord said unto Moses, who soever hath sinned against me," i. e. so as to violate the condition of the Sinai covenant, "him will I blot out of my book." I will blot out of the register of the living, or cut him off from their

their number. Hence in many passages of the Psalms, wicked men are threatned with a sudden, violent, untimely death, or with other dreadful calamities, which should bear an evident signature of being inflicted by the immediate hand of God. See Psal. xi. 5, 6. xxxiv. 16, 21. xxxvii. 1, 2, 9, 10, 20, 35, 36, 38. Iv. 23. xciv. 23. On the other hand, the Old Testament abounds with promises of long life and temporal prosperity to virtuous individuals. See Psal. i. 1,—3. xxxiii. 18, 19. xci. 1,—16. cxii. 1,—3. cxxviii. 1,—4. Prov. iii. 1, 2, 16. ix. 11. x. 27. Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. There are in it particular temporal promises to good kings, Deut. xvii. 20. to upright judges, Deut. xvi. 20. to dutiful children, Exod. xx. 12. Deut. v. 16. to the meek, Ps. xxxvii. 11. to the bountiful and compassionate, Deut. xv. 10, 18. and to other virtuous characters. Several of the blessings promised in these Scriptures, e. g. a numerous and flourishing offspring, Psal. cxxviii. 1,—4. and preservation in time of war, famine and pestilence, Psal. xxxiii. 18, 19. Psal. xci. Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. could proceed only from the special interposition of providence. All these promises may be considered as so many enlargements, or rather explications of that general one, Lev. xviii. 5. “The man that doeth these things shall live in them.” He shall not be cut off by an untimely death, but enjoy a long and prosperous life in the land of Canaan.

Thus promises of temporal blessings and threatenings of the opposite evils are almost every where to be found in the Scripture accounts of the Sinai covenant, whilst there is a remarkable silence as to spiritual and heavenly blessings. And yet, if promises of these last were any how contained in that

that covenant, they were undoubtedly the most precious promises in it. Surely, a happy eternity is better than temporal prosperity : and the favour of God, communion with him, and conformity to his blessed image, are infinitely more valuable, than the pleasures, riches, and honours of this perishing world. Why then does Moses, when urging the Jews to a faithful discharge of covenant engagements, insist almost wholly on promises of temporal blessings, and seldom or never mention, promises unspeakably superior to these in excellence ? Will a good writer, when he means to praise, forget to insist on that which appears to him the chief beauty and glory of an object ? Or is it natural for a man of common sense, when pleading a cause in which he is deeply interested, to overlook that motive, which he himself thinks, and which every one who believes it must think of the greatest force ?

A multitude of festivals were appointed to keep up the remembrance of temporal and outward blessings, which either paved the way for the Sinai covenant, or were secured by it. If the chief blessings of that covenant were spiritual and heavenly, why was not equal pains taken to keep them in remembrance ? Were the Jews, think you, in less danger of forgetting spiritual blessings, than of forgetting temporal ?

.§ 3. Perhaps it may be alledged to invalidate my argument, that the land of Canaan was a type of the heavenly inheritance : that the temporal blessings of the Sinai covenant, were representations, earnests, and pledges of spiritual and eternal blessings : that the meaning of these types and figures was explained to those to whom they were first delivered, and by oral tradition transmitted

mitted to succeeding ages: so that the Sinai covenant was inforced not only by the temporal promises which it literally contained, but also by the spiritual promises, which the letter of that covenant pointed out.—As this is plausible, it merits to be thoroughly examined. That types not explained, were too obscure a medium, for conveying the pretended spiritual sanctions of the Sinai covenant, especially to so gross and carnal a people as the Jews, will be proved § 5. Now no explanation is given of the types, in the books of the Old Testament, which were the only rule of faith and practice to the Jewish church. And surely, that which was intended as a principal sanction of the Sinai covenant, would not have been left to so treacherous and uncertain a method of transmission as oral tradition. We are told, 2 Cor. iii. 13. that “ Moses put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished,” i. e. could not discern what was typified by the precepts and sanctions of the temporary Sinai covenant. Surely, casting a veil over an object, and holding it up to full and open view, are two things so very opposite, that a scheme to do both at once, could never enter into any rational mind. If the meaning of the types was delivered to the Jewish church, a typical delineation would no more have veiled from them the spirit of the law, than the meaning of a Greek or Latin classic is veiled from a boy at school, by publishing it along with an exact literal translation into his mother language. The nature of types demonstrates, that they can have no existence, where there is nothing to be veiled or covered. If therefore, when the law of Moses

ses was given to Israel, the spiritual sense of it was known, or was intended to be revealed, a carnal veil to conceal that sense, must on either of these suppositions be absurd and preposterous. So that the typical genius of the Old Testament, instead of proving, plainly confutes the alledged spiritual sanctions of the Sinai covenant. God saw proper, under the Jewish dispensation, to give some delineation by types and prophecies of the promised Messias, and the blessings of his purchase; that when the Messias should come, the exact correspondence of the gospel-dispensation, to what had been delineated so many ages before, might afford evidence, that both the Old Testament and the New were of divine original. But it would have been highly improper, that the delineation should have been so plain, as to be understood by the people of the Jews, at the time it was given, or at any other period, while the ceremonial law remained in force. The knowledge that their religion was only a shadow of good things to come, would have greatly lessened their esteem of its excellency; nay, would have rendered the yoke of the ceremonial law so galling and burdensome to them, that they would have been forward, without the divine permission to shake it off.. But perhaps the saying so much upon this head can hardly admit an apology, after the clear light in which it has been set by Bishop Warburton in his *Divine Legation*, and the author of *The argument of the Divine Legation fairly stated*, and of the *free and candid examination of the Bishop of London's elegant sermons*. My only plea is, that the best books do not always happen to fall into the hands of those who peruse meaner compositions. And it seemed to me less culpable,

culpable, to adopt sentiments, which I could not improve; than to do wrong to my argument by omitting an essential branch of it, and perhaps also to raise suspicions in some of my readers, that I declined meddling with a knotty objection, merely because I was conscious I could not resolve it. Upon the whole, I firmly believe that Canaan was a type of the heavenly inheritance. But this only proves, that it represented heaven, as the Jews who possessed it, represented the heirs of heaven. It does not prove, that the land flowing with milk and honey, was bestowed, to reveal and seal to its inhabitants spiritual and heavenly blessings.

§ 4. The unchangeable faithfulness of God is another proof, that spiritual and heavenly blessings were not conveyed by the Sinai covenant. Antecedently to that æra, Moses and some others of the children of Israel were under a covenant of grace. The Sinai covenant therefore being made with Moses, as well as with the body of the Jewish people, Exod. xxxiv. 27. could not be a covenant of works, for obtaining eternal life. An opposite way of salvation by free grace, had been established long before, which no constitution or covenant could abolish. “The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disanul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” Gal. iii. 17.

The gospel covenant is not according to the covenant, made with the Jews, when they came out of Egypt (*v*), but essentially different from it, being a better covenant, established on better promises (*w*). Therefore as the gospel covenant

(*v*) Jer. xxxi. 31.

(*w*) Heb. viii. 6.

bestows

bestows spiritual and heavenly blessings, it is evident, that the Sinai covenant does not bestow them. The blessings of the Sinai covenant, were patterns of the heavenly things (*x*), shadows of good things to come (*y*), and surely patterns and shadows differ in nature from the things of which they are patterns and shadows.

The beauty and renown of the Jews, or their dignity, privileges and advantages by reason of the Sinai covenant are represented by Ezekiel (*z*), as something external in which they trusted, which led them to play the harlot, and to consecrate to their idols, what had been bestowed upon them by the bounty of God. Such self-confidence and alienation of heart from God, is often occasioned by outward prosperity. But the influences of divine grace produce other and better fruit.

§ 5. Divine illumination is one of the most important spiritual blessings. But it was not promised to God's antient covenant people. And to the greater part of them it was not vouchsafed. "The Lord gave them not an heart to perceive, "and eyes to see, and ears to hear (*a*)."  
This may be one reason, why the Old Testament dispensation is termed darkness (*b*), and a dark place (*c*).

From this defect in the Sinai covenant, two proofs of what I have been asserting, naturally arise. Divine illumination is bestowed on all interested in the gospel covenant, agreeably to the promises, Isa. liv. 13. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Jer. xxxi. 34. "This

(*x*) Heb. ix. 9, 23. (*y*) Col. ii. 16, 17. (*z*) Ezek. xvi. 15,—20. (*a*) Deut. xxix. 4. (*b*) 1 John ii. 8. Heb. xii. 28. Hb. ix. 2. (*c*) 2 Pet. iii. 19.

" shall be the covenant, that I will make with  
" the house of Israel, after those days, saith the  
" Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts,  
" and write it in their hearts, and they shall  
" teach no more every man his neighbour and  
" every man his brother, saying, know the Lord,  
" for they shall all know me from the least of  
" them to the greatest." But this fundamental  
spiritual blessing, without which there can be no  
holiness here, and no meetness or relish for the  
heavenly glory hereafter, was imparted to a small  
proportion of these interested in the Sinai cove-  
nant. Consequently grace and glory, which are  
ushered in by divine illumination, were not con-  
veyed by it.

Again, men not divinely enlightened, but  
whose minds were blinded, as we are told, 2 Cor.  
iii. 14. the minds of the Jews generally were,  
must be greatly indisposed to raise their thoughts  
to things future and invisible. If therefore spiri-  
tual and heavenly blessings, were veiled from their  
view under dark and figurative representations,  
and not promised to them in plain and explicit  
language, these blessings could not be intended  
as any part, far less, as the chief part of the  
sanction of the Sinai covenant: because obscure  
hints of them must needs escape the notice of so  
gross and carnal a people, and therefore could  
neither affect their hearts, nor influence their  
practice. Surely, infinite wisdom could never  
design a promise as the great foundation and sup-  
port of obedience, which the temper and situa-  
tion of these in covenant with God incapacitated  
them to understand, so long as instead of being  
clearly notified and promulgated, it was industri-  
ously secreted from them by types and obscure  
prophecies,

prophecies, till the Christian dispensation should remove that veil, and bring it into open light.

§ 6. Agreeably to all this, we are told Heb. ii. 3. that “ the great salvation first began to be “ preached by the Lord ; ” 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. that the gracious purpose of God for the salvation of sinners is only “ now made manifest by the ap-“ pearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath “ brought life and immortality to light thro’ the “ gospel ; ” and Heb. ix. 8. that “ the way into “ the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, “ while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” If Jesus was the first who plainly published the doctrine of salvation ; if, until he appeared, the purposes of redeeming love were not opened and unfolded, and immortal life was not brought to light ; if the Jewish dispensation did not declare the means of obtaining the heavenly happiness : we must conclude, that there were not in the Sinai covenant, promises of spiritual and eternal blessings.

But why need I multiply arguments, when the authority of two divinely inspired writers has been interposed, to decide the controversy. We are not only told Jer. xxxi. 31,—34. and Heb. viii. 8,—12. that the Sinai and gospel covenants were essentially different : but are also informed, in what that difference chiefly consisted, even that the latter conferred pardon of sin and the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the spirit. Now this could be neither instance nor proof of such a difference, if the Sinai covenant had done the same things. But the words of the author to the Hebrews will bid fairer to strike conviction into the candid reader, than any thing I can say in illustration of them. “ Behold, the days come,

“ saith the Lord, when I will make a new co-  
 “ venant with the house of Israel, and with the  
 “ house of Judah : not according to the cove-  
 “ nant that I made with their fathers in the day  
 “ when I took them by the hand to lead them  
 “ out of the land of Egypt. For this is the co-  
 “ venant that I will make with the house of Is-  
 “ rael after those days saith the Lord ; I will put  
 “ my laws into their mind, and write them in  
 “ their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and  
 “ they shall be to me a people. And they shall  
 “ not teach every man his neighbour, and every  
 “ man his brother, saying, know the Lord ; for  
 “ they shall know me from the least to the  
 “ greatest. For I will be merciful to their un-  
 “ righteousness, and their sins and their inqui-  
 “ ties will I remember no more.”

§ 7. Let it not however be thought, I would conclude from this and such like Scriptures, that none under the Sinai covenant had an interest in spiritual blessings. I only mean to assert, that the claim of the inwardly pious Jew to pardoning mercy, to sanctifying grace, and to the heavenly glory, was no more founded on his obedience to Moses's law, than Job's claim to these blessings was founded on his being born in the land of Uz, and having seven sons and three daughters. The special favour of God was vouchsafed both to Jew and Arabian, only in virtue of that promise, which being before the law, could not be annulled by it (d). The law, or Sinai covenant, made nothing perfect, that honour being reserved to the bringing in of a better hope (e). It could not give life (f). It could

(d) Gal. iii. 17.

(e) Heb. vii. 19.

(f) Gal.

iii. 21.

not give righteousness (*g*). Sins committed under it, as to their moral guilt, and spiritual and eternal punishment, were forgiven only in consequence of the New Testament, confirmed by the death of Christ (*b*), without whose death the righteousness of God in forgiving these sins could not have been manifested (*i*). So that without us, the Old Testament saints were not made perfect (*j*).

### S E C T I O N III.

§ 1. IT is now time to investigate the condition, the performance of which entitled to the blessings of the Sinai covenant.

This was no other, than an abstinence from servile work on the Sabbath; freedom from legal impurities and gross vices; an offering the sacrifices prescribed in the law; in time of war, the depending on God alone for success, and not having recourse to horses, chariots, or alliance with idolatrous states (*k*); and, in general, obedience to the letter of the law, even when it did not flow from a principle of faith and love.

A temporal monarch claims from his subjects, only outward honour and obedience. God therefore, acting in the Sinai covenant, as King of the Jews, demanded from them no more.

Indeed, no other, and more spiritual obedience could be expected from them. God had not promised in that covenant, to render them inwardly

(*g*) 2 Cor. iii. 9.      (*b*) Heb. ix. 25.      (*i*) Rom. iii. 25.      (*j*) Heb. xi. 40.      (*k*) See Dissertation 4. at the end of Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

holy,

holy. And if we attend either to the general depravity of human nature, or the particular perverseness of their temper, we shall easily be convinced, they could not render themselves holy. If then inward holiness was the condition of the Sinai covenant, the condition of it was something impossible to be fulfilled. And will not this reflect on the wisdom and goodness, nay, even on the justice of God. I acknowledge, God, as Creator, may justly require obedience, though the creature has rendered itself morally incapable to obey. But to suppose him formally entering into a covenant, the condition of which he knew, could not possibly be performed, is a shocking absurdity. If it was one of God's designs in the Sinai covenant, to advance the temporal welfare of the posterity of Abraham his friend; tell me, was that welfare secured, by suspending it upon that obedience to the moral law, which God well knew they neither could nor would yield? was that covenant any real privilege or advantage, the blessings of which were offered on impossible terms, and consequently could never be enjoyed? would it have been consistent with sincerity, to usher in such a covenant, with that kind declaration, *I am the Lord thy God?* To what wise purpose, such pomp and show, and so strong and numerous professions of favour and good-will, if men are prescribed a way to happiness, in which none of them can walk, and consequently by which none of them can ever arrive at it?

The temporal nature of the promises, in the Sinai covenant, proves the same thing. Would that God, who, with a pleasant countenance, beholds the upright, require inward holiness, and only

only promise outward blessings ; require the soul, and reward only the body ; require the creature's love, and yet give it no undoubted token of his love ; require desires of communion and fellowship with himself, and yet not gratify them ; require inward devotion, and promise that, which will be the less valued by us, in proportion as our inward devotion is more elevated and refined ? The hire being servile, the work must be so too. God will never give any less than he claims from them.

It is absurd, to suppose any thing the condition of a covenant, which is not asserted to be a condition, in the covenant itself. And it is equally absurd, to understand the terms of a covenant otherwise, than in the clear, proper, direct sense of the words, wherein they are expressed. Now the Mosaical law, obedience to which all acknowledge was the condition of the Sinai covenant, is employed in directing the outward conduct, not the affections of the heart. It prescribes and forbids a variety of actions, while it seldom enjoins the virtues that adorn the inner man, or cautions against the vices that defile it.

If holiness results from conformity to a law, the Mosaic law, as a condition of the Sinai covenant, can only require outward purity. For it terms all holy, who yielded an outward and ceremonial obedience, how bad soever their hearts might be.

Paul's reasoning, Gal. iii. 11, 12. is another proof of this. " But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident ; for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith : but, the man that doeth them, shall live in them." The force of the Apostle's

title's argument is plainly this : That no man *is* justified by the obedience required in the Sinai covenant, is evident from Habak. iii. 4. "The just shall live by faith." Now obedience to the Sinai covenant is not of faith. It may flow from very different principles and motives ; that covenant requiring nothing more in order to the life promised in it, than our doing or omitting such and such things, and accepting in so far outward obedience, though faith or grace in the heart should not be the root of it.

Many things forbidden to Christians, such as divorce on slight occasions, polygamy, &c. (1) were in that covenant permitted to the Jews, because of the hardness of their hearts. Hardness of heart therefore, however opposite to spiritual devotion, was consistent with an interest in the Sinai covenant.

§ 2. No transgression deprived Israel of the temporal blessings God had promised them, unless idolatry, sinning presumptuously and with a high hand, and such like breaches of the essential fundamental articles of Moses's law. The Scripture often represents these as the source of God's vengeance against them. Thus Deut. iv. 3, 4. "Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baalpeor; for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave to the Lord your God, are alive every one of you this day." Deut. viii. 18, 19, 20. "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God ; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his cove-

(1) Deut. xxiv. 1. Math. xix. 3.

" nant

“ nant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is  
“ this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all  
“ forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other  
“ gods and serve them, and worship them, I  
“ testify against you this day, that ye shall sure-  
“ ly perish. As the nations which the Lord de-  
“ stroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish,  
“ because ye would not be obedient unto the  
“ voice of the Lord your God.” Jos. xxiii. 16.  
“ When ye have transgressed the covenant of  
“ the Lord your God, which he commanded  
“ you, and have gone and served other gods,  
“ and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the  
“ anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and  
“ ye shall perish quickly from off the good land  
“ which he hath given you.” Jer. xi. 10, 11.  
“ They are turned back to the iniquities of their  
“ forefathers, which refused to hear my words;  
“ and they went after other gods to serve them.  
“ The house of Israel and the house of Judah  
“ have broken my covenant which I made with  
“ their fathers. Therefore thus saith the Lord,  
“ behold I will bring evil upon them which  
“ they shall not be able to escape; and though  
“ they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken-  
“ unto them.” Indeed the whole history of  
the Judges is one continued proof of this. And in like manner God did not threaten to cut off  
a particular Jew, and destroy him from among  
his people, on account of pride, covetousness,  
impatience, and other evil dispositions of heart;  
but on account of eating blood, doing work on  
the day of atonement, profane swearing, turning  
after familiar spirits, giving of their seed to Mo-  
loch, and other gross outward vices. In case of  
lesser offences, even knowingly committed, there  
were

were trespass-offerings instituted, Lev. vi. which God promised in so far to accept, as to avert the temporal judgment threatened to disobedience, and to bestow the temporal mercy promised to obedience.

§ 3. Sin-offerings were designed to restore a sinner to the state he was in, before the sin was committed: and therefore the offering them proves, that the sins for which they were offered, would have been a breach of the Sinai covenant, if they had not been expiated by such a sacrifice: and the not offering them in other instances equally proves, that these sins for which no sacrifices were offered, and which yet were not punished by death, are no breach of that covenant, seeing, without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Now ceremonial uncleanness arising from the touch of a leper or dead body; and perjury, rash swearing, sacrilege, lying with a bond-woman betrothed, and other outward immoralities, were expiated by sacrifice (*m*). When the king, the high-priest, or the whole congregation, had sinned, sin-offerings in the strictest sense of the word took place: as trespass-offerings did in lesser sins, or when the offender confessed his fault, without being admonished or convicted by witnesses. But for impurity of heart, not manifested by speech or behaviour, neither the one, nor the other of these, were appointed to be offered.

*But are we not told, that expiation was made on the solemn day of atonement, for all the sins and transgressions of the Israelites? We are so (*n*). But sin there signifies, as it does in many passages of*

(*m*) Lev. iv, v, vi. chap.

(*n*) Lev. xvi. 16, 21, 22.

the

the books of Moses (*o*), the doing something which ought not to have been done. So that the sacrifices on the day of atonement, were only intended to expiate outward sins, which, being unknown, had not been expiated by the ordinary sacrifices. I shall not pretend to deny, that the minds of some might be divinely enlightened, to consider these sacrifices, as shadows and signs of the remission of all their sins, through the sacrifice which the Messias was to offer. I only plead, that there must be a proportion between sin and the sacrifice that expiates it, so that carnal outward sacrifices were insufficient, and spiritual sacrifices necessary, to expiate spiritual and inward guilt. Accordingly the sacred oracles inform us, that the legal sacrifices only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh (*p*), and that it is the blood of Jesus, not these types of it, which purges the conscience from dead works, and, in a proper sense, redeems the transgressions that were under the first covenant (*q*). Indeed so far were the sacrifices under the law from expiating heart-sins, that they did not free the conscience even from the guilt contracted by outward sins. In these respects they were weak and unprofitable (*r*). They only averted temporal judgments, removed the hinderances of an outward correspondence between God and the Jews, restored their right to the temple-worship, and preserved to them, notwithstanding their sins, the benefits of the Sinai covenant. Sacrifices therefore removing only the outward pollution, not the inward guilt, contracted by sinful actions, could have no effect

(*o*) Lev. iv. 2.      (*p*) Heb. ix. 13.      (*q*) Heb. viii. 18, 19. ix. 9, 14, 15.      (*r*) Heb. vii. 18.

as to inward vices, from which no outward pollution was contracted. This observation may throw some light on Acts xiii. 39. “ By him all that believe are justified, from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” That law could not justify from heart-sins, or sins in practice committed with a high hand, or from the intrinsic guilt even of lesser outward sins. Thus, it is evident, that heart-sins were no breach of the Sinai covenant, seeing they were neither punished by death, nor expiated by sacrifice.

§ 4. He who yielded an external obedience to the law of Moses, was termed *righteous*, and had a claim in virtue of this his obedience to the land of Canaan, so that doing these things he lived by them (*s*). Hence, says Moses (*t*), “ It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments,” i. e. it shall be the cause and matter of our justification, it shall found our title to covenant blessings. But to spiritual and heavenly blessings, we are entitled only by the obedience of the son of God, not by our own. The Israelites were put upon obedience as that which would found their claim to the blessings of the Sinai covenant. But they were never put upon seeking eternal life by a covenant of works. It is on this account, that the Mosaic precepts are termed, Heb. ix. 10. carnal ordinances, or, as it might be rendered, righteousnesses of the flesh, because by them men obtained a legal outward righteousness; there was no objection against them, why they might not

(*s*) Lev. xviii. 5. Deut. v. 33.  
25.

(*t*) Deut. vi.

be freely admitted into the congregation and the sanctuary (*u*).

The unchangeable law of nature, requires a perfect obedience both in heart and life, which no son of Adam can say with truth that he has yielded. Yet we find God prescribed to the Israelites a form of glorying in their obedience to the Mosaic law, and of pleading upon that obedience for covenant blessings. Deut. xxvi. 12,—  
15. “ When thou hast made an end of tithing  
“ all the tithes of thine increase, the third year,  
“ which is the year of tithing, and hast given it  
“ unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless,  
“ and the widow, that they may eat within thy  
“ gates, and be filled ; then thou shalt say be-  
“ fore the Lord thy God; I have brought away  
“ the hallowed things out of my house, and also  
“ have given them unto the Levite, and unto  
“ the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the wi-  
“ dow, according to all thy commandments  
“ which thou hast commanded me : I have not  
“ transgressed thy commandments, neither have  
“ I forgotten them. I have not eaten thereof  
“ in my mourning, neither have I taken away  
“ ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given  
“ ought thereof for the dead : but I have hear-  
“ kened to the voice of the Lord my God, and  
“ have done according to all that thou hast com-  
“ manded me. Look down from thy holy ha-  
“ bitation, from heaven, and bless thy people  
“ Israel, and the land which thou hast given us,  
“ as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that  
“ floweth with milk and honey.” Would God  
have directed them, think you, to glory in their

(*u*) See Mr. Lock on Rom. ii. 26.

ob servance

ob servance of that law, if, in fact, the sincerest among them had not observed it.<sup>s</sup> Yet doubtless that was the case, if its demands were the same as those of the law of nature. But indeed, the things mentioned in that form of glorying were only external performances, and one may see, with half an eye, many might truly boast they had done them all, who were strangers notwithstanding to charity, flowing from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

Job, who probably represents the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity, was perfect and upright (*v*). Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (*w*). The young man, who came to Jesus, enquiring what he should do to inherit eternal life, professed that he had kept the commandments from his youth up, and our Lord does not charge him with falsehood in that profession (*x*). Paul was, touching the righteousness which was of the law, blameless (*y*). Yet Job curses the day in which he was born (*z*) ; Zacharias is guilty of unbelief (*a*) ; the young man, in the gospel, loves this world better than Christ (*b*) ; and Paul himself groans to be delivered from a body of sin and death (*c*). These seeming contradictions will vanish, if we take notice, that all of these, though chargeable with manifold breaches of the law of nature, had kept the letter of the Mosaic law, and thus were en-

- (*v*) Job i. 1.      (*w*) Luke i. 6.      (*x*) Matth. xix. 20.      (*y*) Phil. iii. 6.      (*z*) Job iii. 1, 3.  
 (*a*) Luke i. 20.      (*b*) Mat. xix. 22, 23.      (*c*) Rom. vii. 24.

titled to the earthly happiness promised to its observers.

Indeed, in many passages of Scripture, perfection means no more, than a strict adherence to purity of worship, in opposition to idolatry and other gross violations of the Sinai covenant. And therefore, men who, if sincere in religion, were far from being eminent for inward holiness, are notwithstanding termed perfect. Thus it is said of Afa, that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father; and that his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days, 1 Kings xv. 11, 14. And yet he cruelly imprisons a prophet for honestly reproofing him, and so far from amending his ways, he goes off the stage without any record of his repentance and reformation: the last thing said of him being one of the worst, that, in his sickness, he sought unto the physicians and not unto God. On the other hand, though Solomon had grace in sincerity, yet it is said 1 Kings xi. 4. his heart was not perfect with God as David's was: because he was not perfect and steady like David in maintaining purity of worship. This remark was made long ago by the pious Mr. Hooker of Hartford in New England. *Application of Redemption*, book 10. p. 661. and with equal reason Bishop Warburton has observed, *Divine Legation*, vol. II. part I. p. 355.—360. that the title of Man after God's own heart, was given to David, not on account of his private morals, but of a behaviour so different from that of Saul, in steadily maintaining purity of worship. And much for the same reason, God says of Samuel in opposition to Eli, 1 Sam. ii. 35. I will raise me

me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to all which is in my heart and in my mind.

§ 5. You will ask, if this reasoning is just, why did the prophets so often insist upon it, that sacrifices and meer outward obedience were not acceptable to God (*d*)? I answer, in many such passages, the Jews are rebuked for neglecting the moral law, and placing all their religion in the ceremonial: so that it is not so much meer outward morality, that was blamed in them, as meer ritual religion, absurdly intermingled with the worship of idols, and accompanied with theft, murder, adultery, and other gross violations of moral duties (*e*). Besides, even these rites are not absolutely condemned. It is only suggested, that they have no intrinsic worth and value, that God does not love them for their own sakes, and therefore, under a more perfect dispensation, would abrogate them: and that though these rites, joined to external moral obedience, might secure temporal blessings, yet that they could not entitle, as many of the Jews, and even Paul himself, before his conversion fondly dreamed, to the special favour and friendship of God, and to eternal happiness.

It may be further enquired, if meer external obedience was the condition of the Sinai covenant, why were not all who yielded such obedience, blessed according to the promise, with long life and prosperity in the land of Canaan. I have no special concern with this difficulty, since it is almost equal on the contrary hypothesis. Those

(*d*) Psal. l. 8. Isa. i. 11. xliii. 23. Jer. vii. 21.  
Hos. v. 6, 7. vi. 6. Mic. vi. 8. (*e*) Jer. vii. 9, 10.  
Amos v. 21,—24.

who ask the question, will find it as hard to answer it in a satisfying manner, and yet are as much obliged to attempt it as I am. The hypothesis of those, who think that the promise of temporal prosperity in the Sinai covenant, was rather made to the Jewish nation in general, than to particular Israelites (*f*), would, if well founded, afford a full and easy solution to this difficulty. But what has been observed in the preceding section, § 2. perfectly confutes that notion. I would only observe, that if our views of the grounds of God's government were more complete, we should see no cause in any instance to arraign the divine veracity. Men, who seemed to live blameless lives, might, notwithstanding, be punished for outward sins; I mean either for outward sins secretly committed by themselves, or for the outward sins of parents, which were often visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations.

§ 6. There is another difficulty, which merits a fuller discussion. The Israelites were forbidden to covet what was their neighbours, and to lust after evil things, and were required to love the Lord with all their heart and soul, and mind and strength, and to love their neighbours as themselves. Hence it is plausibly argued, that abstaining from actual injustice, freedom from idolatry and other gross sins, and an observance of the external institutions of God's worship, was not the only condition of the Sinai covenant.

That conclusion, however, is more than the ~~\* promises~~ will warrant. These precepts unquestionably prove, that God prescribed to the Jews

(*f*) Alhardt de Roat *Apol. Derit*, p. 72, and 172.

inward devotion. And, which ought to be remembered, they equally prove, that God prescribed to them a perfect obedience, free from the very least sinful defect. Indeed the law of nature, being of eternal and unchangeable obligation, must necessarily have demanded such an obedience from the Jews, as it still demands it from all mankind. But, to suppose perfect obedience required, as the condition of a covenant, in which provision was made for the imperfection of obedience, would be contradictory.

We must not imagine that every thing in Moses's writings relates to the Sinai covenant. Some things in them were intended as a re-publication of the law of nature. And they contain many passages, which evidently relate to the duties and privileges of those interested in the gospel covenant. This is clearly the case with a great part of the 29th and 30th chapters of Deuteronomy. It is expressly said, Deut. xxix. 1. "These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb." Renewing an old covenant, is not making another beside it, which yet is here said to be done. A covenant was therefore at that time set before them, and they urged to enter into it (*g*), distinct from the Sinai covenant, even that covenant which God had confirmed by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*b*), which we know was no other than the gospel obscurely revealed (*i*). In confirmation of this I might observe, that the

(*g*) Deut. xxix. 12.    (*b*) Deut. xxix. 13.    (*i*) Gal. iii. 16, 17.

circumcision of the heart to love God, or, in other words, special saving grace, though no promise of the Sinai covenant, is clearly promised in the covenant, which was revealed to Israel in the land of Moab (*j*) ; and part of the words of that covenant (*k*), are cited by Paul (*l*), as relating to the righteousness offered us in the gospel (*m*). I would not however infer from these chapters, that God meant to unfold to the Jews the nature of gospel blessings. He only gave them a general intimation of better things to come, binding them to believe and long for that season, when the event should unfold the sense of these predictions.

As possibly what I have said may not fully remove the difficulty, I would further observe, that the laws of Moses in general had a spiritual and a literal meaning. The righteousness upon which the temporal prosperity of Israel depended, was the righteousness of the letter of the law. The righteousness through which believers are entitled to eternal life, is the righteousness of the spirit of the law. And as the earthly Canaan was a type of heaven, so that external obedience which gave a right to it, prefigured that perfect obedience of the Redeemer, whereby alone we are entitled to the heavenly bliss. The law therefore, in its spiritual sense, required inward, nay, even perfect obedience. And possibly the prohibition of coveting, and the precept of loving God with all the heart, were left in the letter of the law, to lead good men to the spirit of it : the very letter

(*j*) Deut. xxx. 6.      (*k*) Deut. xxx. 11,—14.

(*l*) Rom. x. 5,—10.      (*m*) Bull's Harm. Apost. p. 77, and 78. operum edit. Grabii.

of these precepts, when taken in their full emphasis, reaching to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart, and forbidding the least sinful desire.

This explains in what sense Paul asserts (*n*), that sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in him all manner of concupiscence, yea, deceived him and slew him. Perceiving as an ingenious congregational minister well remarks (*o*), that the precept thou shalt not covet, commanded not only his outward conversation, but had a spiritual sense in which it reached the very thoughts and affections of the heart: while he was yet in the flesh, he set himself with all his might to obey this precept, bound himself with vows and resolutions against the breach of it, and earnestly implored the divine assistance to render his endeavours effectual, that so he might be blameless in the righteousness of the law. But the more he set his heart on this righteousness, he would be the more strongly affected to the earthly happiness annexed to it as its reward: and thus all his attempts to be righteous by not coveting, only served to quicken and inflame his covetousness. So that finding himself utterly incapable to keep this command, he saw his sin exceeding sinful, and found himself condemned to death, by the spiritual sense of that very law, by which he once thought to live.

Yet still the breach of these precepts, in this their full emphasis and spiritual meaning, was no breach of the Sinai covenant: since, as has been already urged, heart-sins were neither punished

(*n*) Rom. vii. 8,—11.      (*o*) Glazi's Notes on Scripture texts, No. 3. p. 28, 29.

by death, nor expiated by sacrifice (*p*): and since provision was made in the Sinai covenant even for defects in outward obedience, sacrifices being appointed for all offences, that were not committed presumptuously and with a high hand (*q*). The precept therefore, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” considered as a condition of the Sinai covenant, only requires such a regard to the deity, as that we obey the letter of his law. It does not in this view demand sinless perfection, but such an obedience, as fallen creatures have actually yielded: David for instance, who is said to have kept God’s commandments, followed him with all his heart, and did that only which was right in his eyes (*r*); and Josiah who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses (*s*). Not to repeat what was observed § 4. of those being described as perfect, who, if at all sincere in religion, were far from being eminent for inward holiness. The precept, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” considered as a condition of the Sinai covenant; only implies that we should not do these injuries to our neighbour, which we would not wish him to do to us. And the precept, “Thou shalt not covet,” considered in the same light, only prohibits such an inordinate ungovernable desire of what is our neighbour’s, as discovers itself by our employing force or fraud to possess ourselves of his property. And hence it was promised, that at the three an-

(*p*) See § 3. of this section.      (*q*) Numb. xv. 22,  
—31.      (*r*) 1 Kings xiv. 8.      (*s*) 2 Kings xxiii.  
25.

nual festivals, when all the males of Israel appeared before the Lord, “ their enemies should “ not desire their land (*t*),” because God, by an extraordinary providence, was to restrain them at these times from attempting to invade it.

These remarks will serve to illustrate, what is meant by the flesh and by the spirit in Paul’s epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Mr. Glass has observed (*u*), that the letter of the law, or the law in that carnal view without the spirit of it in which it is set before us, Rom. vii. 1, 5, 6. the state of the nation under it, and the suitable disposition of that people to perform the national righteousness, and to enjoy the national happiness annexed to it as its reward, is called the flesh. In some Scriptures the flesh means bondage under the Sinai covenant (*v*) ; and the condition of that covenant is described as the law of a carnal commandment (*w*), and as consisting in carnal ordinances (*x*). The rewards also of that covenant were carnal, and so was the disposition of the Jewish people. Meat and drink were in their esteem chief blessings of the kingdom of God (*y*). Their god was their belly (*z*). And hence of old they gathered themselves for corn and wine (*a*), and afterwards sought the Saviour, not because they saw his miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled (*b*). These then are not after the flesh, but after the spirit, whose prevailing desire it is, not to esta-

- (*t*) Exod. xxxiv. 24.      (*u*) Glass’s Notes, No. 3.  
 p. 27, ~~—~~ 5. e. g.      (*v*) Isa. xl. 6. Phil. iii. 3. Gal.  
 iii. 3. vi. 12.      (*w*) Heb. vii. 16.      (*x*) Heb. ix. 10.  
 (*y*) Rom. xiv. 17.      (*z*) Phil. iii. 19.      (*a*) Hos.  
 viii. 14.      (*b*) Jo. vi. 26.

blish their own righteousness, and to enjoy an earthly happiness, but to be cloathed with a Redeemer's righteousness, and through him to attain the blessings of a spiritual and divine life. Those, on the other hand, are still in the flesh, and walk after it, who hope that their Christian profession and outward religious observances will entitle them to the divine favour ! and who desire temporal prosperity, in one shape or other, more than begun communion with God, and conformity to his blessed image here, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of him for ever hereafter. This is the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, which none put off, till they have been taught the truth as it is in Jesus (*c*). The remains of this old man occasion the strife in believers between the flesh and the spirit (*d*). Even Paul himself found his members, or his frame and constitution as a son of apostate Adam, strongly inclining and disposing him, to trust in his own righteousness, and to seek for happiness in temporal enjoyments. And hence he bitterly complains of a law, that when he would do good evil was present with him, and of another law in his members, even the law of sin, warring against the law of his mind (*e*).

## S E C T I O N IV.

§ 1. POSSIBLY some may imagine, the subject of the preceding sections is of no great importance. The attentive perusal of them,

(*c*) Ephes. iv. 21,—24. Col. iii. 9,—11. (*d*) Gal. v. 16,—18. (*e*) Rom. viii. 21, 23.

will I hope convince such, that just ideas of the Sinai covenant, throw considerable light on many important passages of sacred writ. I now add, that they remove some plausible objections against the faith once delivered to the saints, and afford convincing evidence, that the Sinai covenant was of divine original, but that the Messias is now come, and had authority to annul it.

The preceding pages will guide to the meaning of several texts, which have been often urged for the unscriptural tenets of justification by the deeds of the law, and of the attainableness of perfection in a present life. I shall not trespass on the patience of my readers, by spending time in illustrating what is so obvious. I refer them to section iii. § 4. of this Dissertation.

Ezek. xviii. 24, 26. has been often appealed to as an evidence, that saints may fall from grace, and eternally perish. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." The fallacy of this argument will appear, if we take notice, that a righteous man here means one, who yields an external obedience to the law of Moses, and in virtue of that obedience has a righteous title (*f*) to long life and prosperity in the land of Canaan. The Jews had been murmuring, ver. 2. that they were punished for the faults of their fathers. They did not complain, that they

(*f*) Deut. vi. 25.

were

were exposed to eternal destruction, by their first parent's breach of the covenant of works. And therefore, either to own, or to deny that doctrine, was foreign from the prophet's purpose. The ground of their complaint was, that they, though not guilty of the crimes against which God denounced temporal punishment in the Sinai covenant, yet were punished for the crimes of their forefathers. The prophet, on this occasion, begins with foretelling in the name of God, that the Jewish dispensation, in which the iniquity of the parents was visited upon the children, should be abolished, ver. 3. and that even, while it subsisted, the righteousness of a father would not avail a son who did not imitate it, and the crimes of a father would be of no prejudice to a virtuous son, ver. 10,—18. He next acquaints them, that notwithstanding their former idolatries and immoralities, if they would now reform their ways, and keep God's statutes, they should enjoy the life and prosperity promised in the Sinai covenant, ver. 21,—23: but that those who had hitherto performed the righteousness required in that covenant, would forfeit all title to the blessings of it, if they should commit iniquity, and do according to the abominations of the wicked, ver. 24. In the whole of this chapter, death certainly means temporal and outward evils; and therefore life must as certainly import temporal prosperity. The righteous and the wicked are not here described, by the inward graces of the spirit, or the want of these graces: but by their outward obedience or disobedience to the law of Moses. He is a righteous man in the sense of this chapter, “ who hath not eaten “ upon the mountains, neither hath lift up his

“ eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, nei-  
 “ ther hath defiled his neighbour’s wife, neither  
 “ hath come near to a menstrual woman, and  
 “ hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to  
 “ the debtor his pledge, &c.” ver. 6,—9. Of  
 such a one it is said, ver. 22. “ in his righteous-  
 “ ness that he hath done, he shall live.” i. e. he  
 shall receive life on account of his good works :  
 whereas persons just, in an evangelical sense, are  
 entitled to eternal life by the righteousness of the  
 Redeemer, and live by faith. All therefore that  
 this passage proves, is, that a man, who, for  
 a time, fulfilled the condition, and was enti-  
 tled to the benefits of the Sinai covenant, may  
 at last commit such wickedness and abomina-  
 tion, as will forfeit all these benefits. And,  
 no doubt, this has often happened. One very  
 affecting instance we have in Joash, who did that  
 which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the  
 days of Jehoiada the priest. But, after the death  
 of that good man, both he and his princes, who  
 had seemed equally zealous for religion, forsook  
 God, and served idols. They transgressed the  
 commandment of the Lord, and so could not  
 prosper. And, in the sin that he had sinned,  
 their prince perished (*g*). But, will this prove,  
 that one may eternally perish, in whom the holy  
 Spirit dwells, as a well of living water springing  
 up to eternal life? By no means. The righte-  
 ousness of the Sinai covenant, could be, and of-  
 ten was lost. But Christ’s salvation is for ever,  
 and his righteousness shall not be abolished (*b*).  
 That I have given a just representation of Eze-  
 kiel’s meaning, the reader may be further con-

(*g*) 2 Chron. xxiv. throughout.

(*b*) Isa. li. 6.

vinced,

vinced, by comparing these nearly parallel Scriptures, Jer. xviii. 7,—10. xxii. 2,—5.

§ 2. If the above account of the Sinai covenant is true, it is a demonstration of its divine original. Moses assures the Israelites, that their prosperity should be invariably determined by their observance or neglect of his laws: that, when they were faithful to these, every thing should go well with them; and that, when unfaithful, a flood of calamities should overwhelm them. No principles of human policy could have dictated such assurances. So wise a Lawgiver, would never have made them, had he not known, that the hand of God should visibly appear, bestowing blessings, and inflicting punishments, in execution of these promises and threats. Far less would he, under pretence of these extraordinary providences, have deprived his people of the natural means of their security and defence. I shall say nothing of the years of jubilee and sabbatic years, or of the obliging all the males thrice in the year to come up to Jerusalem, and thus to leave their frontiers exposed to hostile invasion. I shall confine myself to one law. Tho' their neighbours were powerful and ambitious, and well provided with horses and chariots of war, in which the strength of the antient militia chiefly consisted, God prohibited them the use of these dreadful engines of destruction, and enjoined them, when they should prevail against their enemies in battle, to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire, assuring them that his protection, while they thus manifested their trust in it, should more than supply the place of both (i). Had Moses been an

(i) Deut. xvii. 16. Josh. xi. 6. Deut. xx. 1.

impostor, he was not mad enough, to have encumbered his body of laws with a constitution, obedience to which must have infallibly bewrayed the deceit.

But the argument acquires full force, when we view the event of this strange constitution. The judges of Israel, who had neither horses nor chariots, nor numerous armies, by faith in God subdued kingdoms, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the Aliens (*j*). Deborah, who was sent on foot into the valley, delivers Israel from Sisera, who had nine hundred chariots of iron (*k*). Gideon, with three hundred men, destroys the numerous hosts of Midian (*l*). When David had taken from Hadadezar a thousand chariots and seven hundred horsemen, he houghed all the chariot horses, except a hundred (*m*): doubtless, reserving these, not for strength in war, for then he would not have destroyed nine out of ten, but for state in peace. Hence Absalom, affecting the pomp of a King, prepared chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him (*n*); and yet, in the day of battle, we find him mounted on a mule. A strong proof, that the Jews had not yet begun to violate the divine precept; by using horses and chariots in war. David, in whose reign the kingdom of Israel was advanced to its utmost glory, could say, “ Some trust in chariots and some in “ horses, but we will remember the name of “ the Lord our God (*o*).” Solomon was the first who violated this precept (*p*). But troubles

(*j*) Heb. xi. 34.      (*k*) Judg. iv. 10, 13. v. 15.  
 (*l*) Judg. vii.      (*m*) 2 Sam. viii. 4.      (*n*) 2 Sam.

xv. 1.

(*o*) Psal. xx. 7.

(*p*) 1 Kings iv. 26.

soon

soon overtook him. The Edomite on the one side, and the King of Damascus on the other insulted him. And this new military force, instead of enabling him and his successors to quell their enemies, enfeebled and greatly destroyed Israel, by depriving them of the divine protection.

God indeed, in that period, granted his people some very signal deliverances: but it was, when having no strength of their own on which to rely, they had recourse to God alone for protection. See the case of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9,—11: of Jehosaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, 17: and of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 23. and xix. 35. It is evident from many passages in the prophets, that alliance with idolatrous princes, and the warlike use of chariots and horses, was accounted a renunciation of God's protection, and an infallible forerunner of ruin. See Isa. ii. 7,—9. xxxi. 1, —3. Hos. xiv. 3. I am indebted for these remarks to Bishop Sherlock's fourth Dissertation at the end of his Discourses on Prophecy. And as many who read and admire his elegant Sermons, are unacquainted with that performance, I make no apology for transcribing them. The same author has justly observed, in his fifth Discourse on Prophecy, that whenever it was necessary to chasten the Jews for their iniquities, their calamities were prophetically described to them, that they might not be tempted by their adversity to think, that the gods of the nations had prevailed against them, but might know that the hand of their own God was upon them. See Isa. xlvi. 3, 4, 5. Indeed, without such special predictions, every interposition of providence, to execute the functions of the Mosaic law, was a new proof, that God himself was the author of that law,

law, and had annexed to it these sanctions. But the argument for the divine legation of Moses, both from the original sanctions of his law, and the execution of these sanctions, will probably be placed in a fuller and stronger light, when the Bishop of Gloucester shall favour the public with his third Volume.

§ 3. Though I write to Christians, and therefore have often appealed to the New Testament : yet I think the passages I have cited from Moses and the Prophets, abundantly justify the foregoing account of the Sinai covenant. And, if they do, it greatly concerns the Jews, to consider the consequence : even this, that the promised Messias is now come, vested with authority to abrogate the Sinai covenant, and to introduce a new and better dispensation.

Old Testament prophecy plainly asserts, that the dominion of the Messias was not to be confined to the land of Judea, but to extend to the heathen : that all the ends of the earth should be invited to subject themselves to his government : and that nations the most distant should share in the blessings of his kingdom. It was impossible for remote nations to keep the law of Moses, a great part of the worship prescribed by it, being confined to the temple at Jerusalem, and all the males being obliged by that law to appear there thrice every year. The promise therefore, that the Lord should be King over all the earth, is equivalent to a prediction, that the ceremonial law should be abolished.

A prosperous possession of the land of Canaan was a chief blessing of the Sinai covenant, and a blessing insured by promise to all God's ancient people. But it was impossible, that the subjects  
of

of the Messias, who were to be scattered through the whole habitable earth, should share in this blessing. "The land would have been too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, the place too strait for them to dwell in." The extent of the Messia's kingdom rendered it impossible, that Canaan should contain all his subjects. And therefore, under his government, the covenant in which that land was entailed on God's people, as a reward of their obedience, must be abrogated.

Let me appeal to the candid Jew, is not the Christian dispensation, in its own nature more excellent than the Mosaic? Is freedom from gross sins, and the performance of external rites and ceremonies, an obedience equally worthy of reward, with the perfect obedience of him, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and continually went about doing good? Or does a quiet possession of the land of Caanaan, deserve to be compared, with all spiritual and heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus? Surely neither of these can, with the least modesty, be pretended. Is then imposture more excellent than truth? Did a false pretender to the character of Messias, contrive a scheme, which exceeds in glory that dispensation, for whose divine original Jews, as well as Christians, warmly contend? Say not, it is absurd, that men should be entitled to reward through the righteousness of another. Of all men in the world, Jews must plead this, with the worst grace. Their confidence in God is chiefly built on their descent from pious ancestors. And Moses, their divinely inspired lawgiver, expressly asserts, that the peculiar favours conferred on them, were not owing to their superior worth and excellency, but were

were a testimony of God's affection to their worthy forefathers (q). If God saw meet, in testimony of his love to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and as a reward of their obedience, defective and imperfect as it was, to bestow upon their natural seed a variety of outward blessings: wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, in testimony of his love to his own, his only begotten Son, and as a reward of his merit and sufferings, should admit the spiritual seed of this glorious and divine person, to be with him where he is to behold his glory? Do you believe, that the blood of bulls and goats, saved from temporal punishment, men guilty of crimes, which, by the tenor of the Sinai covenant, would otherwise have subjected them to it; and yet can you deem it absurd, that the blood of the equal and fellow of the Almighty, should screen from future vengeance, these who humbly rely upon it?

It was observed Section i. § 6. that the ceremonial law was intended for a middle-wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. But when the earth should become the Lord's and the fulness thereof, there could remain no occasion for such a separation, and therefore Paul justly argues upon this principle, that the distinction of meats is now abolished, 1 Cor. x. 25, 26.

Experience shews, that the Jews do not now enjoy the blessings of the Sinai covenant. What account can they give of this? To charge God with breach of promise would be blasphemy. Do then the Jews fail of performing the condition

(q) Deut. ix. 4,—6. x. 15.

annexed

annexed to that covenant? Neither can this be said with truth. They are free from idolatry and other gross sins, whereby their forefathers often forfeited the divine favour. If they offer no sacrifices, in this they are not blame-worthy, seeing they have no access to that place, in which alone sacrifices can be lawfully offered. They have not eaten upon the mountains, nor lift up their eyes to idols: and many of them, whatever slander may alledge, are not only sober and chaste, but just and honest in their dealings between man and man. But do those of them, who walk the most blamelessly in these precepts, live by them? Do they enjoy the reward, ensured by the Sinai covenant to such outward obedience? Nothing less. They are fugitives and vagabonds in the earth, and from one end of it even to the other, they are scattered among all nations. Must we not conclude from this, that the covenant entailing a prosperous possession of the land of Canaan, upon such an external obedience, as many of them actually perform, remains now no more in force?

One thing merits particular attention. While Jerusalem and the temple yet stood, the Jews were forewarned by the person whom they stile an impostor, that ere the end of that generation, the most dreadful evils should come upon them, as a punishment for their rejecting the true Messias. What Jesus foretold, the event verified, and still continues to verify. Why their sufferings should commence from that æra, and correspond, with such minute exactness, to the threatenings of Jesus, is an event, which the condition of the Sinai covenant, if we suppose it still subsisting, will never account for. That covenant can

can sufficiently account for all the former prosperity and sufferings of the Jews. But here, at once, the light it hitherto afforded, fails us, and we are left in the dark, as to the most considerable event, which ever befel God's antient people. God was always wont to confirm the word of his servants, and to perform the council of his messengers (*r*). But, if Christianity is a cunningly devised fable, must we not conclude, that, for a series of 1700 years, God, by a chain of the most astonishing providences, has confirmed the words of an impostor, and performed the council of a false pretender to the character of Messias?

The source of the present calamities of the Jews, which cannot be learned from Moses's law, is discovered in his prediction, Deut. xviii. 18, 19. of a prophet who, like him, should introduce a new dispensation. A voice from heaven, commanding to hear Jesus, declared who was meant in that prophecy. God's vengeance on the Jews for not hearkening to Jesus, has further declared it. And, according to God's promise, we look and long for a period, when it shall also appear, from the prosperity of the children of Israel, when they have returned, and sought the Lord their God, and Jesus their King in the latter days.

(*r*) Isa. xliv. 26.



## DISSERTATION II.

*The Character and Privileges of the Christian Church, with a Review of Dr. TAYLOR's Key to the Apostolic Writings.*

### SECTION I.

§ 1. **W**E have seen in the first Dissertation, that under the Old Testament, men destitute of inward piety were really in covenant with God, and had a just claim to certain external covenant blessings. In the course of the argument, several Scriptures have been occasionally illustrated, which represent the nature of the Christian dispensation, as in these respects diametrically opposite to that of the Sinai covenant. Many however maintain, that an external covenant subsists under the Gospel, by which professors of Christianity, though inwardly disaffected to God and goodness (*a*), are entitled to certain outward blessings, and church privileges. The common distinction of the church into visible and invisible, or at least the incautious manner in which some have explained it, has contributed not a little to the prevalence of

(*a*) See Taylor's Key, ch. 12. § 236.

this

this opinion. But let us impartially examine, whether it has any solid foundation in the sacred oracles; and for this purpose enquire whether the proofs of such an external covenant under the Old Testament, will equally apply to gospel times.

§ 2. Under the Old Testament dispensation, God manifested himself as a temporal monarch. And hence numbering the people, multiplying chariots and horses, and alliances with infidel states, were severely forbid, because the Jews were to depend upon God alone, as in a peculiar extraordinary manner, their protection and defence. If God stands in the same relation to any society of professed Christians, these and such like prudent methods, of guarding against the ambition of rival states, must be to that society unlawful. A consequence so absurd, that, I suppose, few of my readers are enthusiasts enough to digest it.

Idolatry, under the Sinai covenant, was a state crime, and, therefore, an iniquity to be punished by the judge. The idolater suffered, because he renounced allegiance to his lawful prince, and transferred it to an usurper. If Christ's kingdom was of this world, it would be reasonable to inflict like penalties upon those, who will not that he should reign over them. But Christ himself hath told us, that his kingdom is not of this world; and that it is secured not by external violence or persecution, but by the influences of the Spirit of grace (*aa*).

God,

(*aa*) I shall here transcribe a passage from p. 59, 60. of Dr. Increase Mather's Life, published by his son at Boston 1724. " He became sensible, that the example " of the Israelitish reformers, inflicting penalties on false  
" worshippers,

God, as King of the Jews, visited the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Just as those guilty of high treason, forfeit their honours and estates, for their offspring, as well as for themselves. But we are expressly assured, Ezek. xviii. 3. that, in gospel times, this dispensation of providence should wholly cease. An evidence, that God no more acts in the character of a temporal prince!

The respect paid to God, under the Old Testament dispensation, corresponded to his character as a temporal monarch, and in a great measure consisted in external pomp and gaiety, dancing, instrumental music, and other expressions of joy usual at coronations or triumphs. But the hour is now come, in which the true worshippers, must worship the Father, in spirit and in truth, not with external shew and pageantry.

" worshippers, would not legitimate the like proceedings among the Christian Gentiles. For the holy land of old was by a deed of gift from God, miraculously and indisputably granted to the Israelitish nation, and the condition on which they held it, was their observation of the Mosaic institutions. To violate them, was what carried a rebellion in it, and was an high treason against the king of the theocracy, an iniquity to be punished by the judge! At the same time, sojourners in the land, were not compelled unto the keeping these laws and rites, which Moses had given to his people. Nay, and the Israelites themselves, fell many of them, into the worst of heresies. Yet, whilst they kept the law and rites of Moses, the magistrate would not meddle with them. The heresy of the Saducees struck at the foundation of all religion. Yet, we do not find, that our Saviour blamed the Pharisees for not persecuting them, as they could have done. The Christian religion brings us not into a temporal Canaan. It knows no designs; it has no weapons, but what are purely spiritual."

§ 3. Under the Old Testament, a nation was in covenant with God, many of whom were inwardly disaffected to him. Now, those only, who have the spirit and temper of Christ, are true members of his church.

The words ἔκλεψια ἤγριον, signify a people, not only called, but gathered by a call, who hearken to and comply with the offers of the gospel, and are called, "chosen and faithful," Rev. xvii. 14. who are called by that inward call of the spirit, which renders the outward call of the gospel effectual. A call attended with invincible power, like that to Matthew, Mat. ix. 9. "follow me;" or that John xi. 43. "Lazarus come forth;" nay, like that by which God calls the things that are not, as though they were," Rom. iv. 17. and "commands light to arise out of darkness," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Hence we read of the called according to God's purpose, Rom. viii. 28. and of the purpose of God according to election standing, not of works, but of him that calleth, Rom. ix. 11. So that we may define the Christian church, a society of persons effectually called; or a company of penitents, united by faith and love to Christ as their head, and to one another as members of his mystical body, and on every proper occasion outwardly discovering this union. Now, if the church of Christ, is a society of persons who obey the gospel call, it is evident, hypocrites are no members of that church. For the gospel calls to a humble penitent reliance upon Christ, not to a bare profession of Christianity: and invites us to fellowship with Jesus, 1 Cor. i. 9. and a right to his kingdom and glory, 1 Pet. v. 10. not to any external

external society and advantages. The outward call of the gospel, constitutes none members of the church, save those who comply with it. Else even infidels, and openly profane persons, who hear the gospel preached, would be members of the church. We are invited to come to the church, having on the wedding garment. To come, without it, we are not allowed. God has no where enjoined, those who want faith, to profess it. Indeed, it is impossible, that the God of truth, should enjoin a falsehood. When therefore, we require a profession of faith in order to church privileges, we, on the matter, acknowledge faith itself necessary. For the only reason, why we regard a profession, is, our supposing, that he who makes it, is a true believer. Faith, or rather the righteousness it receives, we consider as the foundation of his title to church privileges, and profession only as an evidence of that title. He, who makes a credible profession, is accounted a member of the church, because from such profession, as an evidence, we judge that he possesses the proper condition of church membership, not because such profession is itself that condition. So that we reckon none members of the visible church, without reckoning them members of the invisible church likewise, or, in other words, without reckoning them united to Christ by a true and lively faith, and entitled to heaven through his perfect righteousness. The union and communion of church members, one with another, is founded only on their union with Christ. Consequently, where there is no real union with him, there can be no real union with the members of his mystical body.

If

If there is an external church, essentially different from the internal, and consisting of different members, then Christ has two churches in the world, and is the head of two mystical bodies. But if the same persons, and none else, are members of the visible and invisible church, then hypocrites are really members of neither, though, from our ignorance of their hypocrisy, they may be accounted such.

Of old, indeed, God had two different kinds of people, the natural descendants of Abraham and his spiritual seed: Jews outwardly, and Jews inwardly: those born after the flesh, and those by the promise. But, now, the slaves of sin, are no more a part of God's family, John viii. 35: those born after the flesh are cast out of the church, Gal. iv. 23, 30: and he only is Abraham's seed, and a Jew in the New Testament sense of the word, who is one inwardly, walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, and doing his works, John viii. 39. Heb. ii. 16. Rom. ii. 28, 29. iv. 12. ix. 6,—8. As the prophets foretold, God has now but one people, who are all holy and circumcised in heart, Isa. iv. 3. xxxv. 8. lvi. 1. liv. 13. throughout. Ezek. xliv. 9. have the law of God written on their hearts, and know the Lord from the least of them even to the greatest, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. And John describing the New Testament church, under the emblem of the new Jerusalem, tells us, that there shall not enter it any thing that defiles, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they only, which are written in the lamb's book of life, Rev. xxi. 27. This also appears to be the meaning of that obscure promise, Isa. lxv. 20. "There shall be no more an infant of days,  
" nor

" nor an old man that hath not filled his days :  
" for the child shall die an hundred years old,  
" but the sinner, being an hundred years old,  
" shall be accursed." Children are governed by passion and appetite, blind to their own best interest, and intent only upon present gratifications. If, in riper years, we still neglect our duty, and follow our natural depraved inclinations : then we continue in a puerile state, losing nothing of childhood save its innocence, neglecting the end of life, and consequently living in vain, and exchanging childish toys for follies more mischievous. Isaiah here foretells, that, in the Christian church, such a prolonged childhood should have no place (b).

But we have Scripture-proofs, of this doctrine, still more express. He only has a title to the honourable name of Christian, who departs from iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19. If any man has not the spirit of Christ in him, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. Christ is the door of the sheep, and therefore none are God's sheep, who enter not in at this door, John x. 7. xiv. 6. He that believeth not, whatever he professes, has no part in Christ's salvation, but is condemned already. Nothing external is of any avail, under the gospel, unless accompanied with the new creature, or faith that worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. vi. 15. Old things are done away : and all things are become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. The Messias is of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and does not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears, Isa. xi. 3. It is the heart, not the outward appearance which

(b) Dr. Heylin's Theological Lectures, p. 44.

he regards. The most splendid performances, if without charity, he accounts as nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. The Lord only knoweth them that are his, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Consequently that which constitutes one a member of the Christian church, is invisible to the human eye. Believing with the heart, as well as confessing with the mouth, is a necessary condition of the gospel salvation, Rom. x. 9. Those who are only outwardly, and in profession religious, are of the synagogue of satan, Rev. ii. 9. iii. 9. Spots in our feasts, 2 Pet. xi. 13. Jude 13. Children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10. Tares sowed by the wicked one, Matth. xiii. 38. False brethren brought in or crept in unawares, Gal. ii. 4. Jude iv. Having no lot nor portion in the blessings of Christ's purchase, because yet in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, Acts viii. 21, 23. Hence Paul pronounces a general sentence of excommunication against false-hearted professors, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. " If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be " anathema maranatha." And, indeed, who can be more detestable, and worthy of a more dreadful curse, than he who harbours in his heart enmity against Christ, under the masque of pretended friendship? In the day of judgment, Christ will profess to all such, depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity, Mat. vii. 22. He could not have said in so absolute terms, that he was never related to them, if he had owned them, while on earth, as his church and people. Does not that rebuke, Matth. xxii. 12. " friend, how camest thou in hither, not " having on the wedding-garment," import, that hypocrites have no right to a place among God's people? We are told, the man thus rebuked

buked was speechless, having no excuse to make for his conduct. But he might have excused it, if bare profession was all that was necessary, to render one a member of the visible church.

The church and the body of Christ are synonymous expressions, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. Ephes. i. 23. iv. 16. Col. i. 24. It is evident, that, in these passages, the apostle speaks of the true mystical body of Christ. For we are told, 1 Cor. xii. 13. that “ by one spirit we are all baptized “ into one body.” And Eph. iv. 16. that from Christ, “ the whole body fitly joined together, “ and compacted by that which every joint sup-“ plieth, according to the effectual working in “ the measure of every part, maketh increase of “ the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.” It is equally plain, that the apostle speaks of particular visible churches, reaping benefit from the various gifts of their teachers. Therefore, every particular visible church, was considered by the apostles, as composed only of true believers: and these not baptized with the Holy Ghost, were accounted by them no members of Christ’s mystical body. What then shall we say of those, who in all their actions are animated and influenced by the devil, who live after the flesh, and retain nothing of the Christian, save the empty name? Christians are as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And is that, think you, the character of men dead in trespasses and sins?

The church is the pillar and ground of truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15. Christ’s sheep, or the members of that church, hear his voice and follow him.

And he gives to them eternal life, so that they shall never perish, John x. 27, 28. They only are Christ's disciples indeed, who continue in his words, John viii. 31. and who glorify the father in bearing much fruit, John xv. 8. Such descriptions can by no means agree to men, who support the most dangerous errors, or who, in their practice, are monsters of wickedness, fulfilling, in secret at least, the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

Let us hear what Christ says, Matth. xvi. 18. Upon this rock, (meaning himself) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Has Christ, or rather has not the devil, polished and fashioned the hypocrite and the secretly profane? Are they built on Christ, and on the doctrine of his apostles: or rather, are they not built on atheism and self-deceit? Against the church, the gates of hell shall never prevail. Do these then belong to the church, over whom the powers of darkness exercise an absolute dominion, and against whom the devil and his instruments prevail to their utter destruction?

§ 4. These arguments appear to me sufficiently plain and decisive. Yet, it may not be amiss to strengthen them, by a survey of the nature and design of the Christian sacraments, and of the qualifications requisite for the right participation of them.

This would indeed be of little importance in our present enquiry, if they were in the right, who maintain, that sacraments are only intended to seal the truth of the gospel, and that therefore such who desire to have that truth confirmed, may partake of them, although they have no actual

actual interest in covenant blessings. If this be so, ignorant and immoral persons, nay, even infidels may be admitted to the Christian sacraments: because even such may desire to be convinced of the truth of Christianity. But, that hypothesis, has no solid foundation. The covenant, it is true, and the seals of it, are freely offered in the gospel. Yet these seals being pledges of covenant blessings, such only who accept that offer, have a right to partake of them. Giving a pledge, implies, that we will give the thing of which it is a pledge. If one offer to enter into a contract, and to give certain pledges of fulfilling it, these pledges would accompany not the offer, but the acceptance of it. Those then, who have no claim to covenant blessings, have nothing to do with the sacramental pledges of them. Persons indeed who had no right to spiritual blessings might typify them, a type not implying any right to the thing typified. And hence bad men were admitted to the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law. But the New Testament sacraments are seals, not types. And blessings can never be sealed to men, no way interested in them.

Let us then enquire, of what covenant baptism and the Lord's supper are signs and seals. And here, on the principles which I oppose, a scheme full of darkness and confusion presents itself. The seals are not a part of a covenant, but something annexed to it for its confirmation; yet, in the scheme referred to, the New Testament sacraments are seals of the alledged external covenant: they are the principal blessings of it: and to complete the absurdity, they are the principal conditions of it too. For profession of Christianity is

the pretended condition of that external covenant. And partaking of the sacraments, is the chief act of that profession.

But error is best displayed by setting in a just light the opposite truth. Scripture sufficiently proves, that the sacraments of the New Testament, are signs and seals of no other covenant, than that covenant of grace, which secures eternal happiness to all interested in it. And the partaking of them manifestly implies, a partaking of covenant blessings on the one hand, and the exercise of faith on the other.—To begin with baptism. John baptized for the remission of sins (*c*), and so did Christ's disciples (*d*). We are told, that baptism saves us (*e*), and by baptism we are said to put on Christ (*f*), to die, to be buried, and to rise with him (*g*): because the water in baptism represents and seals that blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from the guilt of sin, and purchases for us the sanctifying influences of the spirit, and all other needful blessings. Baptism then is a seal of spiritual blessings. And spiritual blessings it cannot seal to the unconverted. —“ But, “ perhaps, baptism is no more than a badge of “ our Christian profession, ingrafting men into “ the visible church, giving them certain out- “ ward privileges, and vesting them with the “ honourable title of children of the kingdom. “ It comes in the room of circumcision. May “ it not therefore be intended for similar purpo- “ ses.” That it came in the place of circumci- “ sion I allow, in so far as circumcision was a seal

(*c*) Mark i. 4.      (*d*) Acts ii. 28.      (*e*) 1 Pet. iii. 21.      (*f*) Gal. iii. 7.      (*g*) Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

to real saints of the righteousness of faith, not in so far as it sealed external privileges to all the Jews, and was a badge of distinction between them and other nations. Baptism has none of these properties, which rendered circumcision a fit sign and seal of an external covenant. Circumcision impressed an abiding mark; was the characteristic of Judaism; belonged to all Jews, however differing in opinion or practice: and those born of a Jew, even when come to age, were entitled to it. Whereas baptism impresses no abiding mark. A profession and suitable practice, not baptism, is the characteristic of Christianity. And persons come to age, have no just title to baptism, till they believe and repent, and therefore are not baptized, unless their opinions and practices appear agreeable to the gospel, their credible profession, and not their descent, founding their outward claim to that privilege. The proof of this is extremely obvious. John's baptism was termed the baptism of repentance (*b*), and baptism to repentance (*i*), because he required of all, whom he admitted to baptism, a profession of repentance, and exhorted them to such a conduct as would demonstrate their repentance genuine (*j*). Peter demanded repentance of his hearers, in order to baptism, and only they that gladly received his word were baptized (*k*). And Philip acquaints the Eunuch, if thou believe with thy whole heart, thou mayest be baptized (*l*). Well therefore, does Paul join together, the washing of water, and the renew-

(*b*) Acts. xix. 4.      (*i*) Mat. iii. 11.      (*j*) Mat. iii. 6, 8.      (*k*) Acts ii. 38, 41.      (*l*) Acts viii. 37, 38.

ing of the Holy Ghost (*m*), as things which should never be separated. And, for the same reason, Peter informs us, that baptism is of no avail unless attended with “the answer of a “good conscience (*n*),” i. e. a sincere and cordial acceptance of the offers of the gospel.

The Lord’s supper was instituted to keep up a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ (*o*), as a sacrifice fully expiating sin, and purchasing for us all the blessings of the new covenant (*p*). Christ, by giving us the symbols of his broken body and shed blood, seals and confirms our right to himself, and to all the blessings of his purchase. And hence the Lord’s supper is termed the communion of the body and blood of Christ (*q*), not because it assures us that believers in general are saved, but because it is delivered to us in particular, as a pledge of Christ crucified, and of all his benefits. We, on the other hand, by shewing forth Christ’s death, do profess, to look upon it as the procuring cause of a joyful and spiritual life. When we receive and feed upon the sacramental bread and wine, we declare our spiritually receiving and feeding upon Christ, and express our warm and grateful sentiments of redeeming love, and by sitting down with others, who make the same profession, we signify, that we are all partakers of the same faith, and of the same covenant blessings, and, on that account, bound to the most fervent mutual affection (*r*). These are the ends of the Lord’s supper. Without the exercise of faith,

(*m*) Tit. iii. 5.      (*n*) 1 Pet. iii. 21.      (*o*) Mat. xxvi. 27.      1 Cor. x. 16.      (*p*) Luke xxii. 19.      1 Cor. xi. 26.      (*q*) 1 Cor. x. 18.      (*r*) 1 Cor. x. 17.

they

they cannot be attained. And therefore, without faith, we must needs be unfit for that ordinance. It was intended, for those alone, for whom Christ's body was broken, and for the remission of whose sins Christ's blood was shed (s). And hence it is enjoined (t), let a man examine himself, and so let him eat. The Greek word *δοκιμαζετω* is borrowed from goldsmiths trying gold, whether it be genuine or counterfeit : and is used to signify trying the quality or goodness of anything, in order to determine whether it is of the right sort. Here it means, examining, whether we are real Christians, or false-hearted hypocrites. The reason of the precept appears from the next verse. Grace alone capacitates to discern the Lord's body with that spiritual gust and relish, without which we partake unworthily, and eat and drink judgment to ourselves.

I acknowledge, however, that ministers may lawfully dispense the sacraments, to hypocrites who have a credible profession. And so may a judge lawfully assign you a sum of money, when by credible witnesses you prove your right to it, though, after all, you may have bribed these witnesses to perjure themselves. But though ministers may lawfully dispense the sacraments to hypocrites, hypocrites cannot lawfully demand them. The exercises of soul to be performed in receiving them, are exercises of which true believers alone are capable. They only can wash their garments, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. They only can spiritually receive and feed upon Christ's body and blood.

(s) Luke xxii. 19, 20. compared with Mat. xxvi. 28.  
(t) 1 Cor. xi. 28.

The external rites others may perform, but ~~not~~ in the manner which makes them seals of the covenant, and that is the only manner in which God allows them to be performed. And thus I have fully shewn, that the seals of the covenant are under the New Testament peculiar to the inwardly pious, and that therefore none else are now in covenant with God.

## S E C T I O N II.

§ I. **L**E T us next enquire, what are the blessings, of the alledged external covenant, between God and professors of Christianity, though in heart insincere?

The chief blessing promised to Israel, in the Sinai covenant, was temporal prosperity. But no such promise is made, either to the visible or invisible Christian church. Every individual disciple of Jesus, must lay his account with crosses and afflictions (*u*). How then can a society, consisting of professed disciples, look for exemption from them? The appearance of holiness must meet with little favour, in a world, where real holiness is hated or despised. In every age, some who profess Christianity in its genuine purity, are involved by that very profession, in peculiar hardships and distresses. If God had promised to bestow upon them temporal prosperity, this could by no means be reconciled with his truth and faithfulness.

(*u*) Matth. xvi. 24. John xvi. 33. Acts xiv. 22.  
Tim. iii. 12. Heb. xii. 6, 7.

The treasure of the Christian is in heaven (*v*). Every outward blessing he enjoys on earth, is only an appendage to his inheritance (*w*), dispensed to him in a sovereign manner, in so far as is for God's glory and his good, not claimable by any absolute promise.

Godliness, indeed, has still the promises of the life that now is (*x*), and our Lord has assured us, that the meek shall inherit the earth (*y*). But whatever these promises import, they are confined to the meek and godly, and therefore afford no shadow of proof, that unsincere professors of Christianity are in covenant with God. Probably, they relate to an uncommon temporal prosperity of the church in the latter days. If they extend to Christians in all ages, they must be explained of that sanctified use of temporal blessings, which is peculiar to the truly godly, and cannot mean the outward possession and enjoyment of worldly comforts, because, in that respect, the professed Christian is often equalled, if not exceeded by the infidel and profane.

Men may make a gain of pretended piety, and by assuming a form of godliness, while strangers to the power thereof, may reap considerable outward advantages. But these advantages they receive not as covenant blessings, and in virtue of a promise. How a hypocritical profession, which God despises, and against which he has denounced the severest threatenings, can notwithstanding be the means of obtaining his blessing, and interesting in his promises, is indeed hard to be conceived.

(*v*) Mat. vi. 20.      (*w*) Mat. vi. 33.      (*x*) 1 Tim. it. 8.      (*y*) Matth. v. 5.

§ 2. The gospel-call is not so properly the privilege of the church, as the instrument by which the church is gathered. In itself, it is a glorious means of conveying the blessing. In the issue, it proves a blessing to those only who accept it. A preached gospel, when slighted or neglected, aggravates the sinner's condemnation. Besides, it ought to be remembered, the gospel-call is not confined to professed Christians. It extends to avowed infidels and to profane persons, who live among Christians, though that these are in covenant with God, none will alledge. The gospel-call, is as much a blessing to the unconverted, before they make a false profession, as after they have made it. They acquire no new right to it by their hypocrisy. And their salvation does not become a whit the more probable, by their assuming the Christian name.

§ 3. The sacraments of the New Testament are seals of the covenant of grace: and he who has no interest in that covenant, has no right to them, and no capacity to use them profitably. This I have shown at large, Section i. § 4. They are therefore no instituted means of conversion, being intended to strengthen faith where it is, not to produce it where it is not. God may bring good out of evil, and make the unwarrantable use of the sacraments, an occasion of a hypocrite's conversion. Yet still his unworthy partaking was no covenant-mercy, but an eating and drinking judgment to himself. If reflections on this sin, produce that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation, reflections on blasphemy, murder, or adultery, may do the same. But who would, on that account, ascribe to these shocking crimes, the happy fruits of penitential

niential sorrow? If the symbols of Christ's body and blood so affect the eye and heart, as to issue in a faving change: that is an accidental benefit, which rarely happens, and which properly flows from the view of the sacramental elements, not from the use of them.

§ 4. Perhaps it will be said, that professors of Christianity, though unconverted, are honoured with the title of Saints, and sometimes favoured with the gifts of the spirit.—But the name of a Saint, without the thing, can scarce be accounted a blessing. And the gifts of the spirit are not dispensed by covenant, but from the free sovereign pleasure of God, and are intended for spreading the gospel, and edifying the body of Christ, not for the private benefit of him that is endued with them. Though we had them all in the highest degree, yet without charity or love to God and our neighbour, we should be nothing.

§ 5. Has the unconverted professor, a better claim to the fellowship of the faithful, or is he better qualified to relish their spiritual enjoyments, than the infidel, or the openly profane? Are the living and the dead united? Do minds of the most irreconcilably opposite dispositions, maintain a friendly intercourse? Can a true believer, and a hypocrite or self-deceiver, be said to be equally yoked? Are they suited, to mourn together, under a sense of the pollution of their nature, and of the sinfulness of sin: to rejoice together in the dear Redeemer: and earnestly to pray together for the influences of God's spirit, the light of his countenance, and the refreshments of his presence? The one says in his heart, it is good for me to draw near to God. The other says to the Almighty, depart from me,

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I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. And are these likely to strengthen each other's hands in the good ways of God. If to hear the word without believing it, or to eat and drink judgment to themselves, if these are privileges of the faithful, then, and not otherwise, unconverted professors are perfectly well qualified for communion with them.

§ 6. What then are the covenant blessings, that belong to unconverted professors of Christianity? Surely, not the spiritual blessings infallibly connected with salvation, for in these, believers only have an interest. Not outward prosperity, that being no where promised in the covenant of grace, either to the visible, or to the invisible church. Not the sacraments, which, unless as signs and seals of spiritual blessings, are of little value. Not the call of the gospel, for they have no more benefit by it, than infidels, and the openly profane. A strange covenant indeed, which confers only an empty unmeaning title, but from which the persons in covenant derive no advantage!

### S E C T I O N III.

§ 1. LET me next examine the condition of this alledged external covenant.

If the unconverted have a right to any blessing in the covenant of grace, it must be either from their descent, their profession, their faith, or their obedience.

Birth confers no such right on persons come to age. Our opponents acknowledge, that without a credible profession, none are to be admitted

to the Lord's table: and that even the children of heathens, if they make such a profession, may be admitted.

§ 2. Does then a bare profession of Christianity give a real right to any covenant-blessing? It were strange indeed, if God should thus reward, what he has severely prohibited, Psal. l. 16, 17. "Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Has any man a right, to pretend to be, what in truth he is not: to put on the garb of a child of light, while he is indeed a child of darkness? will seizing what does not belong to us, give us a legal title to it? will stealing and wearing another man's cloaths, constitute a relation between me and him, and entitle me to his lands? is a wolf a sheep, because he happens to be in sheep's cloathing? do falsehood and dissimulation render men holy, and give them a claim to church privileges? Are not men, who differ in profession from a world lying in wickedness, if they resemble it in disposition, linked by a straiter tie, to the world than to the church?

Let me ask, why a right to certain covenant-blessings, arises from a bare external profession. It will, I suppose, be answered, because, in the judgment of charity, men account that profession true. Well. The supposed truth of the profession, is that upon which men proceed. If the profession appeared false, they would utterly disregard it. Shall then the Searcher of hearts regard that, which our ignorance of the heart is our only reason for regarding? we imagine a profes-

profession sincere, and therefore approve it. Is that a reason for God's approving it, who knows it to be hypocritical? So soon as the hypocrisy of a professor is manifested, he is no longer looked upon by men, as a member of the church. It was always manifest in the sight of God. Therefore God never looked upon him as such. If man's knowledge of a professor's hypocrisy, exclude him from the church, much more must God's knowledge of it exclude him. So that external profession renders a person in covenant with God, only in the apprehension of other men, not in reality.

That faith and holiness are no way necessary to found a rightful claim to church privileges, and yet that God should forbid admitting any to these privileges who do not exhibit credible evidence, that they are thus qualified, is unreasonable to suppose. It would be ridiculous to demand probable appearances of piety, previous to receiving men as members of the church, if, without piety, they had as true and lawful a right to be thus received. If the want of a qualification do not invalidate my right to a thing: want of the appearance of that qualification can never warrant others to obstruct my possession. The servants of a family act an indecent and unwarrantable part, if they cast vessels out of a house, which the master of the house esteemed a proper and useful part of his household-furniture. And the church is righteous overmuch, if she insists on something higher than God himself requires, nay, forbids men that which God has allowed them.

§ 3. The right of the unconverted to covenant-blessings cannot flow from faith, because the unconverted are destitute of that grace.

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Nor can it flow from their obedience, for only that obedience, which springs from faith, is accepted of God. I acknowledge freedom from idolatry and other grosser vices, and the observance of certain external ceremonies, entitled Jacob's posterity to the blessings of the Sinai covenant. And that unconverted professors of Christianity may be free from gross vices, I doubt not. But so too may professed infidels. And yet none will pretend, on that account, that they are separated from the world, and devoted to God. The two sacraments are the only rites of divine institution binding upon Christians. And they are purely signs and seals annexed to the covenant of grace, and therefore of no benefit to men not interested in that covenant. They are intended to seal a covenant, not to make one. The unconverted have neither right to these seals, nor disposition to use them for the purposes of their institution. And can they confer sacred holiness, when we do not use them as God has prescribed, yea, when we have no right to use them at all? Vicious intromitting with what does not belong to us, may gain us favour from men who know not our wickedness and deceit, but can never recommend us to the Searcher of hearts who perfectly knows them.

When Paul says, 2 Cor. v. 16. " Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh;" the meaning is, that now, under the gospel, we regard no man as entitled to church privileges, either by descent, or by obedience to what is termed, Heb. vii. 16. the law of a carnal commandment.

## SECTION IV.

§ 1. I Should do injustice to my argument, if I said nothing of some passages of Scripture, from which, those who read without due attention, may be apt to conclude, that hypocrites are true members of the church.

The church seems compared to a field, where tares grow up with the wheat, to a threshing floor, where good grain is mixed with the chaff, to a net which draws bad fish as well as good, and to a feast where a guest comes, not having on the wedding-garment, Matth. xiii. throughout; and xxii. 11. Must we not conclude from these Scriptures, that hypocrites are members of the church?—By no means. Unless we must also infer, that chaff is good grain, and that tares are wheat, because they often happen to be mingled together. There is no occasion for an inference thus dishonourable to sacred writ. These parables represent to us, not the nature of the church, but her condition in this world; where hypocrites are mingled with Christians, breathe the same air, worship in the same temple, and make the same outward profession. Bad fish as well as good are drawn by the gospel-net, i. e. The preaching of the gospel excites many, who remain inwardly wicked, to profess Christianity. Yet the bad fish are not put into vessels with the good, i. e. they have no real fellowship with them, and do not partake in their privileges. The field, where the tares grow up with the wheat, Christ himself has told us is the world, not the church. And, if the parable of the tares shews,

shews, that hypocrites mix with the godly in the visible church; it also shews, that they have no right to do it, that they are fraudulently sown in God's field by the devil, and though for a time borne with, shall at last be disgracefully rooted out. Such would therefore do well to consider, what honour they derive, or what benefit they can reap from a church-membership of which the devil is the author. The feast where a man came, not having on the wedding-garment, represents the folly of those who not only pass for good men in the eyes of the world, but fancy themselves entitled to the blessings of grace and glory, though they are not cloathed with the spotless robe of the Redeemer's righteousness.

§. 2. Our Lord says, John xv. 2. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away," which seems to intimate that men may be branches in Christ or members of the church, and yet spiritually unfruitful.—I answer, hypocrites may be termed branches in Christ, because they were esteemed such by themselves and others; as apostates are said to be blotted out of the book of life, Psal. lxix. 29. Rev. xxii. 19. because, though not really elected, they had once been accounted so. Or these words may be a threatening, that Jesus would root out the Jewish nation, as barren and unfruitful branches, from the vineyard of his church, i. e. deprive them of their covenant-relation to God, and of the blessings connected with that relation. See Rom. xi. 22. This is Cyril's interpretation, lib. 10. c. 24. Or, perhaps, the words *εις εμα* should be joined, not to the preceding words *παρ κλημα*, but to the following *μη φερεν*. And then it intimates, not that there are unfruitful branches in Christ the true

true vine ; but that there are branches, which not being in Christ, and having no sap and nourishment from him, bring forth no fruit acceptable to God, and so must be rooted out, and cast into hell-fire. The Syriac version favours this interpretation, every branch which in me brings not forth fruit.

§ 3. 1 Cor. v. 10,---13. is brought as an evidence, that men may be brethren, and within the church, who yet are covetous, extortioners, or living in some other course of presumptuous sin. But though this passage shews, that bad men may be tolerated in the world, and civil intercourse lawfully kept up with them : it equally shews, that church-fellowship with those whom we know to be bad, is unlawful. The Israelites, in the time of the passover, were to search, and cast out of their houses, all the leaven that was in them, and that was allowed to be in them at other times. --- The New Testament dispensation is one continued passover, in which unconverted sinners, who were formerly members of the same external society with the godly, are to be cast out of the church, which is now a new lump unleavened, admitting only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Hypocrites may lurk in the church, as leaven might lurk in a house, in the time of the passover, notwithstanding the most diligent search. But hypocrites have no right to be there, and, so soon as they are discovered, must be turned out. They are called, *Brethren*, 1 Cor. v. 11. They are members of the church in the opinion of others. But brethren in truth they are not. They seem to be within, and indeed are within the church, as to the body, but they are without it as to the soul. They are within,

within, in the same sense, as leaven, which ought to have been without. It deserves our notice, that the apostle does not speak of some of the church as within, and others as without, and thus give countenance to the distinction of a visible and an invisible church, but speaks of all the members of the church as within, and of the world as without. All then who belong to the church, are within, or members of the church invisible. Some are so, truly, and in the eyes of God; others, only apparently, and in the eyes of men. The first have a title to be within. The second have no title. If we reckon them within, it is only, because their profession being credible, we charitably believe it sincere, and that consequently they are united to Christ. And hence, so soon as we find, from their course of life, that their profession was deceitful, it becomes our duty, to renounce communion with them.

§ 4. 2 Tim. ii. 20. is also urged to prove, that God intended there should be bad men in the church, as in a great house, there are wooden vessels, and vessels of dishonour. But as Origen well observes, contra Celsum, lib. 4. p. 210. the great house, in this passage, means the world, and not the church. The world is termed a house, Matth. v. 15. For the apostles who are to give light to those in the house, are termed, ver. 14. the light of the world. And from ver. 16. it appears, that those in the house, means persons to be converted to Christianity, by the shining of the apostles light, and who consequently were not yet converted. And though the church is termed a house in other Scriptures, yet, when Paul wrote to Timothy, a great house would have

have been no fit epithet for Christ's little flock. And indeed in this passage, the church and the world seem plainly distinguished. The world is represented as a great house, in which are vessels of dishonour, bad men as well as good : the church as a pillar in that house, peculiarly belonging to God, and having holiness engraven upon it. Let me add, it would be strange, if Christians were required, ver. 21. to purge and separate themselves from heretics and profane persons, and yet, in the immediately preceding verse, these vessels of dishonour were represented as a necessary part of the church's furniture. In the world, that great house, vessels of dishonour must be admitted. But it is the duty of the church to rid herself of them, for to her, no vessels, save vessels of honour and mercy, belong. Compare Rom. ix. 21.

§ 5. They are mistaken, who think, that the outer-court, Rev. xi. 1, 2. represents the visible church. For the church considered as inwardly the habitation of God, and outwardly employed in his worship, is represented by the temple and inner-court, where was the altar, and where the Israelites worshipped. But the outer-court represents a corrupt society, assuming the name of the church, whose pretensions God will demonstrate to be false, and which he will give up to be trodden down by her enemies. This may be the reason, why the angel commissioned to measure the temple, was prohibited to measure the outer-court, because that outer-court was properly no part of the temple.

## S E C T I O N V.

§ 1. **T**HUS, it has been sufficiently proved, that a church is a society of saints, sincerely professing the same faith, partaking of the same sacraments, interested in the same spiritual privileges, and entitled to the same heavenly blessings: and that therefore hypocrites belong not to that society. This is the Bible idea of the word church, and therefore it ought to be received, however it differ from fashionable opinions. Yet it may not be amiss to shew, that this was also the sentiment of the primitive Christians.

The Catholics and Donatists entertained the same notions about the nature of the church. They only differed about her marks, and where she was to be found. The Donatists asserted, that if a church retained in her bosom the openly profane, it was thereby defiled, nay, ceased to be a true church, so that its act became null and void, and baptism, conferred in it, was to be renewed. The ministry of a hypocrite they acknowledged, that of an openly profane person they denied to be valid. They confessed, that men secretly wicked, though intermingled with the church, did not pollute her, because she was ignorant of their wickedness (a). The Catholics went further, and held, that the church was

(a) Optat. Milevitanus, l. 2. p. 44. ed. Parif. Coll. Carthag. 1. p. 39, and 3. p. 87, 89. Augustinus in Breviculo Coll. 3. c. 8. libro post Coll. c. 9, 10. & contra Epist. Parmeniani, l. 2. c. 10. § 21.

not

not defiled even by harbouring those within her, whose wickedness she knew (*b*). Augustine often appeals to Cyprian as of this opinion. His own opinion was, that hypocrites may be tolerated in the church, because it is impossible for men, by searching the heart, to spy out their hypocrisy, but that those should be expelled out of it, whose naughtiness is publicly known (*c*).

§ 2. In the mean time, none of the fathers maintained, that hypocrites were true members of the church. To begin with Augustine. How warmly soever he opposed the Donatists, yet he acknowledges *de doctrina Christiana*, l. 2. c. 22. and in many other places, that the church properly means a collection of regenerate persons, who truly believe in Christ, and who all together make up the one mystical body of Christ their head. He says in express terms, *de doct. Christi*, l. 3. c. 32. “ Non enim revera Domini cor-  
“ pus est, quod cum illo non erit in æternum.  
“ De Baptismo, contra Donat, l. 4. c. 13. Sem-  
“ per ab illius ecclesiæ que sine macula & ruga  
“ est unitate, divisus est, etiam qui congregati-  
“ oni sanctorum, in carnali obduratione misce-  
“ tur. Ad ecclesiam non pertinent avari, &c.  
“ ibid. l. 5. c. 3. Videntur esse intus, nec ta-  
“ men ad unicæ illius columbae membra perti-  
“ nent, ib. c. 16. Ecclesiam non tenent, nisi  
“ qui divina mandata custodiunt, reliqui intus  
“ tantum videntur, ib. c. 27. Non omnes qui

(*b*) Their arguments for this may be seen, Coll. Carthag. 4. p. 39. Augustine. *de unitate eccl.* c. 24. & in libro, *contra Parmenianum & Petilianum*.

(*c*) Ep. 54. ad Cornelium, p. 78. ad Baluzii & ep. 52. ad Antonianum, 74, & 74.

" nobiscum sunt, ex nobis sunt, *ib.* l. 6. c. 3. Non  
 " pertinent ad ecclesiam, quamvis intus esse vi-  
 " deantur, *ib.* c. 24. § 44. Qui super arenam  
 " ædificant, verba Domini audientes, sed non  
 " facientes, extra petram esse convincuntur, quod  
 " est extra ecclesiam, *ib.* l. 7. c. 51. Puto me  
 " non temere dicere, alios ita esse in domo  
 " Dei, ut ipsi etiam sint eadem domus Dei :  
 " alios autem ita dici esse in domo, ut non per-  
 " tineant ad compaginem domus, sed sicut esse  
 " palea dicitur in frumentis. *De unitate Eccle-*  
 " *sie*, c. 25. § 74. Multi sunt in sacramento-  
 " rum communione cum ecclesia, & tamen jam  
 " non sunt in ecclesia." Hypocrites lurking in  
 a church, were no more accounted by Augu-  
 stine a part of it than excommunicated persons :  
 whence he infers, *De unit. eccl.* c. 4. & *de Bapt.*  
*contra Donat.* l. 7. c. 2. that though we have fel-  
 lowship with a church, in which bad men lurk,  
 we have no fellowship with these bad men.

Cyprian's sentiments are equally clear. *De  
opere & Eleemosynis*, p. 241. " Quid fecit in do-  
 " mo Dei perfidum peccatum? Quid, qui Christo  
 " omnino non credit, appellatur & dicitur Chri-  
 " stianus?" & *Ep.* 55. p. 83. he tells us, that  
 those only who persevere are the church, and that  
 apostates are not of God's planting, but as it is  
 said, 1 John ii. 19. though they went out from  
 us, were never of us. Indeed, the high enco-  
 miums given the church throughout Cyprian's  
 works, demonstrate, that he did not consider hy-  
 pocrites as members of it.

Origen tells us, that wicked men are not to  
 be accounted Christians (*d*) ; that they were not

(*d*) *Contra Cels.* l. 4. p. 176.

F

admitted

admitted except by fraud to their assemblies (*e*) : that a Christian, who is truly such, subjecting himself only to God and his word, cannot be hurt by the devils (*f*) ; that the body of Christ is the whole church of God animated by the Son of God ; and that the members of this body are whosoever believe, because as the soul enlivens and moves the body, which of itself is destitute of life and motion, so the *λόγος* excites his mystical body the church, and every member of it to a becoming temper and behaviour, so that without him they do nothing (*g*) ; that he who commits gross sins, such as covetousness, fornication, &c. is not truly a brother, but, as the apostle observes, is only called a brother (*h*) ; that, if the gates of hell prevail against any, they are not that church which is built on a rock, but a multitude of men in the church, falsely boasting that they belong to it ; and that a soul having spot and wrinkle, and not holy and undefiled, is neither the church, nor a part of it (*i*). He grants that the churches in his days were filled with bad men, but often insinuates, that those were only members of the church in name, and that to call societies of bad men churches, was an impropriety of speech (*j*).

*Tertullian. ad nationes*, l. 1. c. 5. “ Cum alii  
“ quos de nostris malos probatis, jam hoc ipso,  
“ Christianos non probatis.”

Clemens Alexandrinus defines the church the congregation of the elect (*k*) ; and says, there is

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|--|--|--|---|
| ( <i>e</i> ) Origen, contra Cels. p. 178.<br>p. 401. | ( <i>f</i> ) Ib. l. 8.<br>( <i>g</i> ) Ib. l. 6. p. 309. | ( <i>b</i> ) Comm. ad Matth. p. 234.<br>( <i>i</i> ) Ib. p. 276. | ( <i>j</i> ) Ib. p. 260,<br>442, and 481. & Homil. 15. ad Jerem. p. 147. ed. Hu-<br>cuii. |
|  |  |  | ( <i>k</i> ) Strom. l. 7. c. 5. p. 346. ed. Potteri.                                      |

one true church, in which the righteous are enrolled according to the decree, and which gathers within her bosom, those whom God had pre-destinated, having foreseen they would be righteous (*l*).

Hermes's Pastor asserts, that men whose faith is feigned, and who have not forsaken all wickedness, though they may lurk in the church, do not belong to her (*m*).

Nothing can be fuller or stronger on this head than the words of *Irenaeus Adversus Hereses*, l. 3. c. 24. edit. *Maffuet*. “ Ubi enim ecclesia, ibi & “ spiritus Dei; & ubi spiritus Dei, illuc eccle-“ sia.” And l. 1. c. 10. he says, that the true members of the church have one heart and soul, as well as one mouth.

Athenogoras's testimony is equally express, *Apol.* c. 2. ed. *Ox.* εδεις γαρ χρισταρος πνευματος, ει μην υποκρευεται την λογον.

Justin Martyr pronounces it evident, that those are not Christians, though in words they may profess the doctrine of Christ, who do not live as he has taught (*n*).

Ignatius expressly distinguishes between being called Christians, and being truly so (*o*); speaks of some who were only Christians in appearance (*p*); and expresses his desire, that he might not only be called a Christian, but found such (*q*).

So universally known was the distinction, between those who were, and those who only called themselves Christians, that it did not escape

(*l*) *Ibid.* p. 899.      (*m*) L. 1. vis. 3. L. 3. sim. 9. § 13, and 18.      (*n*) *Apol.* 2. c. 22. ed. *Grabe*. (*o*) *Ep. ad Magnes.* c. 4.      (*p*) *Ep. ad Trall.* c. 10, (*q*) *Ep. ad Rom.* c. 3.

the notice of heathen writers in those early ages.  
*Pliny Epist. l. 10. ep. 97.* “Propositus est libel-  
“lus sine auctore, multorum nomina continens,  
“qui negarent se esse Christianos, aut fuisse,  
“quum, praeunte me, Deos appellarent, &  
“imagini tuæ, quam propter hoc iussoram cum  
“simulacris numinum adferri, thure ac vino sup-  
“plicarent, præterea maledicerent Christio; quo-  
“rum nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt revera Cri-  
“stiani. Ergo dimittendos putavi.”

§ 3. Besides these direct proofs, there are several opinions and practices of the fathers, which plainly imply a belief, that hypocrites were not members of the church. They reckoned that believers and holy persons alone, had a right to the sacraments. What else meant the Deacon's crying with a loud voice, before the dispensing them, “Sancta sunt sanctis, nemo accedat im-  
“paratus (r). Let none come in hypocrisy, or  
“only with a feigned faith and love (s). Let him  
“who is baptized be a stranger to all wickedness,  
“a friend of God, an enemy to the devil, chaste,  
“pure, holy (t), &c.” Augustine says, that bad men, whether in the church or out of it, have no just or lawful title to baptism (u): and Origen, that he only rightly and with profit partakes of the Eucharist, who does so with an undefiled mind and a pure conscience (v). Tertullian informs, that a solemn renunciation of the devil, and of the pomps and vanities of the world, was

(r) Chrysostom hom. 17. in ep. ad Hebr. & Eclaircissemens sur la Eucharistie par Blondel, c. 22.

(s) Const. Apostol. l. 2. c. 57. (t) Ibid. l. 3. c. 18. (u) De baptismo, contra Donat. l. 5. § 8.  
(v) Comm. ad Matth. p. 254.

always

always previous to baptism (*w*) : and that we are not baptized that we may renounce sin, but because we have already renounced it, and are purified in heart. “ Non ideo abluiimur, ut defini-  
“ quere desinamus, sed quia desimus ; quoniam  
“ jam corde lati sumus (*x*).” Hippolitus mentions as a condition of baptism, the washing away our moral impurity, and casting from us the burden of sin (*y*). And Justin Martyr says, it is lawful for none to partake of the Eucharist, unless he believe our religion true, having been washed in the laver of regeneration ; and live so, as Christ has enjoined (*z*).

The state of the Catechumens is another proof of this (*a*). For at least two years, they continued under trial : and were not honoured with the name of brethren, or admitted to baptism and church-membership, until it appeared, upon a strict enquiry into their behaviour, that they were resolved to live as became the disciples of Christ (*b*). I might add, that the refusing to restore apostates to church privileges, without the fullest evidence of their sincere repentance, indicates their opinion, that they only have a right to those privileges, who are truly Holy.

§ 4. The antients, instead of distinguishing as we do between a visible and invisible church, asserted, that there was one only church, consisting of true believers, united in faith, worship,

(*w*) De Cor. Milit. c. 3.      (*x*) De Penitentia,  
c. 6.      (*y*) Homil. in Theoph. § 10. Op. ed. Fa-  
bricii, vol. I. p. 264.      (*z*) Apol. 1. § 86. p. 128.  
ed. Grabe.      (*a*) Pfanner de Catechumenis, c. 1.

(*b*) Origen, contra Cels. 1. 3. p. 142. & Con. 42. Con-  
cili Eliberitoni.

and government : of which one church, some were really members, while others only seemed to be so, and in truth were as much without it, as Pagans and Jews (*c*). Hence Origen often terms hypocrites *τας νομιζόμενας από της εκκλησίας*. A society of true believers, united to one another in external communion, was the only thing, the fathers acknowledged as a church. So far were they from owning a visible church, distinct from the invisible : that they did not own an invisible distinct from the visible. Had they acknowledged an invisible church in the sense we do, they would no doubt have acknowledged, that all were members of it, who were renewed in the spirit of their mind, whether baptized or not, whether outwardly joined or not to any particular society of Christians. But so far was this from being the case, that their Catechumens, whatever appearances they had of piety, were never accounted church-members, or styled by them Christians or Brethren (*d*). For the same reason, Schismatics, who, though agreeing with the church in doctrine and worship, had on other accounts separated from her, were reckoned by the fathers, no true Christians, but cut off from the body of Christ (*e*) : yea, destitute of love to God, and enemies to the Redeemer (*f*). They

(*c*) Besides several of the passages cited, § 2. from St. Augustine and others, see Augustin. doctrin. Christ. l. 3. c. 32. & de Bapt. contra Donat. l. 1. c. 17. l. 4. c. 16. l. 6. c. 8. (*d*) Pfanner de Catechumenis. Bingham Orig. Eccles. l. 10. c. 1, 2. (*e*) Cyprian ep. 52. ad Antonianum, p. 73. Augustin. de unit Eccles. c. 4.

(*f*) Cyprian ep. 72. ad Stephanum. Augustin. de bapt. contra Don. l. 3. c. 16. l. 4. c. 17. & contra Crescen- um, l. 2. c. 10.

would never have embraced this uncharitable and unscriptural hypothesis, had they acknowledged an invisible church, made up of good men of opposite sentiments and practice in matters of doubtful disputation. They rightly held that inward faith and holiness, as well as purity of worship, and a profession of orthodox sentiments, were requisite, in order to union with the church. But then,<sup>\*</sup> it soon became a generally received ~~opinion~~<sup>notion of</sup>, suggested perhaps rather by pride and party spirit, than Scripture or reason, that the proper form or essence of the church consisted in ~~Christianity,~~<sup>Roman & other em-</sup> ~~braced Ch~~<sup>soon, &c.</sup> fellowship with the Apostolic churches: by which they meant subjection to Bishops lawfully elected and ordained, and invested in their office by the apostles, or their successors in uninterrupted succession: as also union and agreement with other lawful Bishops, and the churches under their care.

§ 5. The greater part of modern Christians, have, I acknowledge, in their sentiments of the nature of the church, widely deviated from Scripture and antiquity. And the fiction of a visible church, really in covenant with God, and yet partly made up of hypocrites, has almost universally prevailed. What were the causes of this, I stay not to enquire. One thing however deserves to be remarked. Truth, in this particular, has gained signal advantages over vulgar prejudice and systematic ideas, even where it has not enabled men entirely to shake off these fetters. Many able Lutheran divines, who espouse the common distinction of a visible and invisible church, and warmly oppose the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of Saints, have notwithstanding asserted and proved, that the proper notion

notion of the word Church, in the New Testament, is, the congregation of the inwardly sanctified, or, as others express it, those elected to eternal life, and against whom the gates of hell shall never prevail. The Reader may consult Jo. Gerhardi loci *Communes*, tom. V. *Loc. de Ecclesia*, § 50. p. 241. Seb. Schmidii *Collegium Biblicalum posterius loc. 16. diet. 1. § 20, 21.* Davidis Hollazii, *Examen Theologicum acromaticum*, Part. 4. cap. 1. quæst. 3; 4, 14. Jo. Fr. Buddei, *Instit. Theol. Dogmaticæ*, l. 5. c. 3. § 2. not. \*\*\*: the length of which passages, would too much swell this work, and therefore forbids my transcribing them. Nay, Arminian writers have strongly argued against Popish Divines, that God alone knows who are members of the church, because inward faith and purity, though indispensably requisite for church-membership, are invisible to the human eye. See Limborchii *Theologia Christiana*, l. 7. c. 13. § 18. & seq. Nor have there been wanting writers, no way inferior to the best and wisest of the fathers, who have more thoroughly adopted their ideas on this subject. I might mention many great and good men in both Englands, who have defended the congregational plan of church-government (*ff*), or the exclusive right of true believers to the Lord's Supper. The learned Vitringa has cast considerable light on this subject in his *Observationes Sacrae*, l. 5. c. 7, 8, 9. But none have handled it with such accuracy of method, force of genius, extent of

(*ff*) The congregational plan of church-government, I am far from approving. But it is no reason with me, for rejecting an important truth, that congregational divines have asserted it.

learning,

learning, and depth of judgment, as Hermanus Venema, an eminent professor of divinity in Holland. By his *Dissertationes Sacrae*, published at Harlingen 1731, I was first led to just sentiments of the opposite nature of the Jewish and Christian dispensations: and have received from them considerable assistance in composing this and the preceding Dissertation. With pleasure do I hearken to the voice of justice and gratitude in acknowledging these obligations, and returning my hearty thanks. Happy shall I be, if my feeble attempts to illustrate and strengthen his reasonings, to vindicate them against new objections, and to point out the important purposes for which his discoveries may be improved, are not wholly in vain.

## S E C T I O N VI.

§ 1. THE account I have endeavoured to establish of the nature of the Christian church, however agreeable to Scripture and antiquity, has the misfortune to be diametrically opposite to the system advanced by the late learned and ingenious Dr. Taylor, in his Key to the Apostolic writings. A view of that celebrated work, shall close this Dissertation.

He rightly asserts, that men became members of the Christian church by faith, without the works of the law, no kind of obedience performed by them, whether perfect or imperfect, entitling them to that privilege, § 247. But then he reduces the privileges of the Christian church to little, and faith to still less.

The faith, according to our author, § 250, 251, which gave a person a place or standing in the Christian church, was a faith consistent with a man's remaining wicked and perishing eternally: being nothing more than a profession of faith in Christ as the Saviour of the world, considered simply, and separately from the fruits and effects of it. I need only refer my reader, for a confutation of this notion, to Section i. § 3. and Section iii. § 2. of this Dissertation, and to the account of the nature of Christian faith, Dissertation III.

By virtue however of such a faith, he tells us, all without distinction, are admitted to the church and covenant of God, and to all the honours, privileges and grants therewith connected, such as election, salvation, justification, adoption, sanctification, &c. But these privileges do not ascertain the favour of God in a future world.

Christians, though God's chosen people, may, and often do, misimprove them, and then, as other wicked people, must have the wrath of God for their portion, chap. ix.—Indeed, though election, salvation, &c. sound high, yet, when the Doctor comes to explain them, they amount to little more, than being delivered from the power of heathenish darkness, which many are who do not profess Christianity, as much as they who profess without believing it.

§ 2. There are two pillars, on which Dr. Taylor's system rests.

The first is this. God is said to elect, save, call, create, beget, nay, even to walk, purge, and sanctify the people of the Jews; and is spoke of as their God, Father and Husband: and they are

are termed his children, spouse, saints, a holy nation, &c. yet their being thus exalted in spiritual privileges, above other nations, did not ensure to them the continuance of God's favour. The most terrible judgments in time and eternity, were denounced against them, if they neglected duly to improve these privileges. And when disobedient to God's will, numbers of these, his chosen people, fell a sacrifice to his vengeance, *Key*, chap. ii, and iii. Now believing Gentiles are taken into that church and covenant, out of which the unbelieving Jews were cast; the visible kingdom of God, whereof the Jews were of old the only members, being now enlarged, to admit all, who believe in Christ, to the same, nay, to greater spiritual advantages than the Jews enjoyed, *Key*, chap. v. Since then Christians are taken into that kingdom, from which the unbelieving Jews were ejected, and since the privileges of Christians are expressed by the same phrases with those of the antient Jewish church; unless we admit a strange abuse of language, these phrases, when applied to them, and when applied to us, must convey the same general ideas. Christians therefore are God's elect, as selected from the rest of the world, and taken into his visible kingdom. God has saved, redeemed, created, begot them, as he has bought and rescued them from their wretched situation in heathen ignorance and idolatry. And they are saints, a holy nation, sanctified, washed, &c. as set apart and appropriated in a special manner to God's honour, service, and obedience, and as furnished with extraordinary means and motives to holiness. And as such privileges once belonged to every Jew, so now they belong to all professed Christians,

Christians, not even those excepted, who for misimproving, are threatened to have their candle-stick removed out of her place, *Key*, chap. ii.

The Doctor's argument would have been fully conclusive, had he proved, that believing Gentiles are taken into a church and covenant, precisely the same with that out of which God cast the unbelieving Jews. This he has indeed attempted to prove, chap. v. § 66.—75. But some of his arguments only prove, that the Gentiles were received into the Abrahamic covenant, which, as appears from Gal. iii. 17, differs greatly from the covenant made with the Jews at mount Sinai. And if some of them seem to show, that Gentile converts are taken into the church and kingdom of God, out of which the Jews were cast: even that will make nothing for his purpose, as we have proved in the three first Sections of this Dissertation, that there was, in consequence of Christ's coming, an alteration of the constitution of God's kingdom, the character and privileges of his subjects, and the tenor by which they were to hold these privileges. One thing further I would here observe. They who, like Zacheus, were sons of Abraham, or members of the Jewish church, are spoke of as lost, Luke xix. 10. and as lost sheep, Matth. x. 6. xv. 24. In this view Christ came to save them. Consequently Christ's salvation, or the blessings of the New Testament, were what they had no interest in, tho' members of the Jewish church. That visible kingdom of God, of which every true Christian is a member, is therefore totally different in its nature, from that kingdom out of which the unbelieving Jews were cast. Men in  
the

the one, might be in a lost condition. Of those in the other salvation was the common privilege.

I acknowledge the state, membership, privileges, honours, and relations of Christians, are expressed by the same phrases with those of the antient Jewish church. Yet, there is no abuse of language, though these phrases convey very different ideas, when applied to these different cases. If a covenant securing outward privileges, typified a spiritual dispensation; the same phrases, when applied to the first, must of necessity have a lower and meaner sense, than when applied to the second. Attention to this obvious remark, would have prevented the Doctor's leading his many followers into so wretched a labyrinth. The name Israel is often given to the Christian church, *Key*, § 75. Does it thence follow, that the Christian church, like the Jewish, was composed of Israel's natural seed? Our author will not say so. Why then is that name given to the Christian church? Doubtless, because Israel after the flesh typified that church. Just for the same reason, the privileges of the Jewish church, are often expressed in terms, which, in their full and more spiritual sense, are applicable only to true Christians.

§ 3. His second argument has a more specious appearance. The substance of it is, Those to whom Paul and the other apostles addressed their epistles, are spoke of in general as saints, called of Jesus, beloved of God, justified by faith, God's temple chosen in Christ, saved by grace, holy brethren, children of God, &c. Yet these very persons are exhorted to stand fast in the faith; and walk worthy of their christian vocation: and cautioned to take heed, least they fall, least any

any man beguile them of their reward ; least being led aside by the error of the wicked, they fall from their own stedfastnes ; least sin should reign in their mortal bodies. Nay, they are told, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. If we deny Christ, he will also deny us. Election therefore, adoption, vocation, salvation, justification, sanctification, &c. are *antecedent blessings*, belonging at present to all Christians, even those, who for their wickedness do perish eternally ; and do not import any thing necessarily and absolutely connected with a right temper and behaviour, with stedfastness in religion, and with the enjoyment of the heavenly bliss. *Key, ch. x. xi. xii.*

I acknowledge this reasoning is plausible, and merits a very particular and critical review : from which I think it will appear, that more than one link in the chain is faulty. The fact he alledges, cannot be disputed, that in the inscriptions of Paul's epistles, and other places of sacred writ, whole churches are termed holy, tho' doubtless there lurked in them many hypocrites. But in the inference from that fact, there is an evident mistake. In these very epistles characters peculiar to good men, are ascribed to the members of these churches, and is it not plain from this, that the apostles addressed them upon a charitable supposition, that they were inwardly pious. They did not consider hypocrites, tho' mingled with the church, as constituting any part of it : and therefore to have regarded them, in their descriptions of churches or addresses to them, would have been absurd. What has been advanced, Sect. i. § 3. seems sufficient to convince the

the impartial, that those only are true members of the church, who are endued with the spirit and temper of Christ, and thereby secured against total and final apostacy. Yet as a further proof of what I assert, it may not be improper minutely to consider, what the apostles say, of the character and privileges of those, whom they address as members of the church of Christ.

§ 4. Paul addresses the members of the church at Rome, as men beloved of God, Rom. i. 7. who rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, v. 2; who had received the spirit of adoption, the spirit of God witnessing with their spirits that they were the children of God, yea heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, who as they now suffered should hereafter be glorified with him, viii. 15, 16, 17. He thanks God, that they had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that had been delivered them, and were made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness, vi. 17, 18. He assures them, tho' their sentiments about rites and ceremonies differed, yet that both parties acted from an honest and truly gracious principle, and as they lived to the Lord, so should die to him, xiv. 6, 7, 8. Nothing can be stronger than that expression, xv. 14. I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you are full of goodness.

Many things are said to the Corinthians, plainly implying, that they were inwardly holy, and that their eternal happiness was secure: 1 Cor. i. 8. Who shall confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ver. 30. Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom, righteousness,

*sancti-*

sanctification, and redemption. iii. 16. Know you not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you. Ver. 21—23. All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All are yours, and ye are Christ's. vi. 2. Do ye not know that *the saints* shall judge the world, and if the world shall be judged by you, are *ye* unworthy to judge the smallest matter? Ver. 11. Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. He urges their certain prospect of a glorious resurrection as an argument to stedfastness and vigour in the work of the Lord, xv. 49—58. In the 2d epistle, he writes in the same manner. 2 Cor. i. 7. Our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the suffering, so shall you be also of the consolation. Ver. 14, 15. We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of Jesus. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you. Ver. 21, 22. Now he which established us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit into our hearts. iii. 3. For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. vi. 14. Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath *righteousness* with unrighteousness?

It were easy to cite a multitude of similar passages from Paul's other epistles. Thus Gal. iv. 6. 7. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the

the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, **Abba, Father.** Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then *an heir of God* thro' Christ. vi. 1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, *ye which are spiritual,* restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Compare Gal. v. 22, 23. The fruit of the spirit is meekness. Eph. i. 13, 14, 15. In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that **holy spirit** of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. Wherefore I also, after that I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you. Phil. i. 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. ii. 12, 13. Whetefore, my beloved brethren, as ye have always obeyed not as in my presence only; but now much more in my absence; work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. iv. 19; My God shall supply all your need; according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Paul addressing the Colossians, i. 4, 5, 6. speaks of their faith in Christ, their love to all saints, the hope laid up for them in heaven, and the gospel's bringing forth fruit in them; since the day they knew the grace of God in truth; and tells them, iii. 3, 4. Ye are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

i Thess. i. 3—10. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labours of love, and patience

patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in  
the sight of God and our Father. ii. 13. For  
this cause also thank we God without ceasing,  
because when ye received the word of God that  
ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word  
of man, but as it is in truth the word of God,  
which effectually worketh in you that believe.  
Ver. 19. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown  
of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of  
our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? v. 4. Ye,  
brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should  
overtake you as a thief. v. 23, 24. The very  
God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray  
God your whole spirit and soul and body be pre-  
served blameless unto the coming of our Lord  
Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you,  
who also will do it. 2 Thess. i. 3—7. he speaks  
of the great increase of their faith and charity,  
and their patience in persecution and tribulation,  
as manifest tokens of their interest in the hea-  
venly rest. 2 Thess. iii. 3. But the Lord is faith-  
ful, who shall establish you, and keep you from  
evil.

The other apostles wrote in the same strain,  
acknowledging the truly godly alone, as mem-  
bers of the christian Church. Peter, 1 epist. i. 5,  
8, 22. addresses the dispersed strangers, as per-  
sons who were kept by the power of God thro'  
faith unto salvation: who loved Christ, and be-  
lieving, rejoiced in him, with joy unspeakable  
and full of glory: and as having purified their  
souls in obeying the truth thro' the spirit unto  
unfeigned love of the brethren. ii. 5. Ye also  
as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an  
holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices  
acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Ver. 7. Un-  
to

to you therefore which believe he (i. e. Christ) is precious. 2 Pet. i. 1, 12. Peter describes those to whom he writes, as having obtained like precious faith with the apostles, as knowing religion, and as established in the present truth : and iii. 1. represents it as the design of both his epistles, to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance.

1 John ii. 12, 13, 14. I write unto you, because your sins are forgiven you, because ye have known him that is from the beginning, because ye have overcome that wicked one, and because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you. Ib. ver. 27. But the anointing, which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you. But as the same anointing teacheth of all things, and is truth, and no lie ; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. iv. 4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

But to multiply particular citations is needless. The spirit and frame of the epistles would be perfectly unaccountable, should we suppose them partly addressed to hypocrites and self deceivers, who had the form, but were strangers to the power of godliness, and thus were every moment in danger of dropping into the pit of destruction. Doubtless, had that been the case, they would have been calculated, as sermons recorded in other parts of scripture directed to such people are, to awaken in them a sense of their hazardous condition, and to excite them to fly from the wrath to come.

Every particular church mentioned in the New Testament, is described as consisting of persons united to Christ by faith and love, and inwardly holy. We must either say, that in these times, no hypocrites were intermixed with the church; or that, tho' intermixed with it, they were no part of it. The first is improbable. The instance of Simon the sorcerer proves, that in admitting men to the church, the apostles did not always act by the gift of discerning spirits. Paul considers it as possible, that men might give all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned, who yet wanted charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Ananias and Sapphirah, Hymenæus and Alexander were for a time deemed sincere by their fellow professors. Peter does not pretend to an absolute knowledge of Sylvanus's uptightness, but only says of him, By Sylvanus a faithful brother to you as I suppose, 1 Pet. v. 12. Since then the apostles addressed societies in different places outwardly associated for divine worship, by properties peculiar to good men, it follows, that they considered none else as members of these societies.

I am aware, that in reprobating or commanding, the sacred oracles sometimes speak as if all were intended, when they only mean the greater part, e. g. Gen. vi. 12. 1 Chr. xiv. 17. Jer. ix. 26. Matth. xxi. 26. But if accounting in that way for the favourable character given the members of the apostolic churches, would remove the present objection to Dr. Taylor's scheme, let it be remembered, it would also deprive that scheme of its chief support, the argument I mean from whole churches being described as elected, saved, sanctified, &c. Besides it is far from being certain, that

that even in the apostolic churches, the greater part was always true believers. The state of the primitive churches was not so pure, as many paint it, when Paul wrote thus to the Philippians, speaking of Timothy, Phil. ii. 20, 21. For I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

After all, we are not left to conjecture the cause, of the ascribing the graces of the spirit to whole churches, in the epistles. 1 John ii. 19. plainly solves this doubt, and assures us, that these only, who have an abiding principle of holiness, are true members of the church. The heathens seem to have accused the christian church, as harbouring in her bosom, men of the most corrupt sentiments and abandoned lives, meaning probably the Gnostics, who a little before had separated from the church. To this the apostle replies, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us." These men were never true church members. They have indeed unjustly intermingled themselves with the society of Christians. But their leaving that society evidences, that they never had a just claim to make a part of it, altho' for a season they wore the garb of it, and seemed to belong to it in the eyes of the world. For every true member of the church, is by faith united to Christ, and thereby secured from apostacy. These therefore who apostatize, manifest by their apostacy, that they were never true members of the church. Agreeably to this, we

are told, Heb. iii. 6. that they only are Christ's house, who hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Our communion therefore with professed Christians, is only conditional. We account them members of Christ's mystical body, and love and esteem them as such, on supposition, that their profession is genuine. Churches therefore ought to put away from among them, those whose profession is discovered by their practice to have been unsincere. To renounce fellowship with such, christian charity forbids not, nay duty requires. On the other hand, in separating from a corrupt church, we only separate from it, in so far as it is corrupt, and still maintain inward fellowship with such of its members, as love our Lord Jesus in sincerity, tho' with their errors we have no fellowship.

Imagine not then, that to be in the church is to be in such or such a place or company. No. It is to be members of the mystical body of Christ, united by faith to him, and by love to our fellow christians. If Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, and we are rooted, and grounded in love, we belong to the church, tho' we were banished to the most solitary wilderness. If faith and love are not in us, we belong not to that sacred society, tho' we had associated ourselves with the apostles; nay, tho' as Judas, we had attended Christ during the whole of his public ministry.

§ 5. Thus I have sufficiently proved, that they only were considered by the apostles, as true members of the church, who were endued with the temper and spirit of Christ, and thereby secured against total and final apostacy. The cau-

tions

tions in the epistles against apostacy, neither prove that bad men were considered as christians, nor that good men may finally fall away. They were proper however on two accounts: to awaken from carnal security, hypocrites and self deceivers, intermingled with, tho' not truly members of the church: and to promote the good behaviour, and secure the perseverance of real Christians. An event may be absolutely secured by the divine decree, and yet in order to bring it about, a particular mean may be absolutely necessary. Paul had assured those in the ship with him, that there should be no loss of any man's life among them, Acts xxvii. 22—25. and yet when the shipmen were about to fly from the ship, he says to the centurion, and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved, ib. ver. 31. In like manner tho' Christ gives to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, yet diligence and watchfulness are necessary as means of their preservation.

## S E C T I O N VII.

§ 1. **T**HIS much shall suffice in answer to Dr. Taylor's general arguments. Tho' my cause does not require it, yet for the fuller conviction of sincere enquirers after truth, I shall now subjoin some positive evidences, that election, vocation, salvation, adoption, and other blessings which the Doctor terms antecedent, are not to be understood in the low sense in which he represents them.

I begin with *Election*. Peter says, 1 epist. v. 13. The church that is at Babylon elected together

gether with you saluteth you. If elected means separated from the rest of the world, and taken into God's visible kingdom, then elected together with you must mean, converted at the same time that you were to the profession of christianity. And then we must suppose, what is by no means probable, that the conversion of the church at Babylon, and of the numerous strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia and Bithynia, was of the same precise date.

Again we are exhorted, 2 Pet. i. 10. to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. If election and vocation mean no more, than Dr. Taylor alledges, then Christians are there exhorted to make it sure that they profess christianity, for which purpose, one would think, no great diligence was requisite. That passage must therefore mean, ascertaining by holiness of heart and life, that we have been elected to eternal happiness, and made meet for it by converting grace. Thus by the effects, the cause is certainly known, and by the streams we are led to the fountain. It was in this way that Paul tells the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. i. 4—10. he knew their election of God, even from the powerful influence of the gospel on their temper and conduct.

Election evidently means the eternal decree of God, to give grace and glory to a certain number of mankind : Eph. i. 4. According as he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. 2 Thess. ii. 13. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, thro' sanctification of the spirit and belief

belief of the truth. *From the beginning* does not mean from the first preaching of the gospel, but from eternity, in which sense the phrase is used, 1 John ii. 13. Mic. v. 1. For God's calling them by the gospel is clearly distinguished from this choosing them from the beginning, ver. 14.

§ 2. In what sense Christians are called, I have explained, Section i. § 3. From the passage, 2 Pet. i. 10. cited above, we may learn, with how little ground the Doctor asserts (*Key*, ch. 6. § 79.) that called only means brought out of heathenism, and invited and made welcome to the honours and privileges of God's people: and (note on Rom. viii. 28.) that effectual calling is a distinction divines have invented without any warrant from scripture. I would seek no better warrant, than the scripture to which that note is subjoined. Does not the apostle say, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose? and is this true of all, who are brought out of heathenism, and invited to the privileges of God's people? Indeed the end of the 8th chapter of the Romans is so full against the Doctor's hypothesis, that his paraphrase and notes upon it are a mass of confusion; and after all the freedom he takes to supply the text, it remains a plain contradiction to his favourite system, that saints may finally perish. He says (note on Rom. viii. 28.) Whatever befalls us, suppose we love God, certainly concurs and tends, to compleat our salvation; and on ver. 29, 30. suppose that we love God, it is certain from our being called, that we shall be glorified with the Son of God. It is true, he insinuates in his paraphrase on ver. 35. not very

consistently with these assertions, that Christians may lose this love to Christ by not endeavouring sincerely to cleave to him in purity and obedience.

We read Heb. ix. 15. of Christ's dying, that they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. And Rom. viii. 30. speaks of a calling infallibly connected with glorification. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Dr. Taylor indeed, artfully enough disguises that connection, by the turn he has given in his paraphrase to the last clause. "Whom he purposed thus to justify, upon their due improvement of this his grace to them, he purposed to give eternal life and glory." But, there is nothing in the text, answering to these words, "upon their due improvement of his grace." He makes no such supplement to any of the other clauses, as indeed, consistently with his own scheme, he could not. The connection of justifying and glorifying, is expressed in the very same terms, as the connection of calling and justification. Can then, the Doctor's supplement to the last clause, flow from any thing, unless desire to varnish over a difficulty too hard for him to resolve?

It is said, 1 Cor. i. 26. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." The wise, the mighty, the noble, had the outward call of the gospel as well as the poor. The apostle therefore speaks of an effectual calling, in virtue of which men become

come sincere Christians, and of which at that time, few in high life were sharers.

§ 3. Adoption and regeneration are privileges absolutely connected with eternal life, Rom. viii. 17. If children, then heirs. What they are heirs of, the scripture abundantly declares. They are heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 29. Heirs of promise, Heb. vi. 17. i. e. of every blessing contained in the promise, which God at first made to fallen man, and has since confirmed by his oath. Heirs of salvation, Heb. i. 14. Heirs of the grace of life, 1 Pet. iii. 9. Heirs according to the hope of eternal life, Tit. iii. 7. Heirs of righteousness, Heb. xi. 7. Heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised, Ja. ii. 6. and as immediately follows, Rom. viii. 17. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Christians are represented, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. as begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fa-deth not away.

But John's first epistle contains the fullest and plainest proofs, that only persons of true piety are born of God, and that all such shall finally persevere. Thus iii. 9, 10. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." v. 4. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Ib. v. 18. "We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but

“ he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and  
“ that wicked one toucheth him not.” iii. 2. “ Be-  
“ loved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth  
“ not yet appear what we shall be : but we know,  
“ that when he shall appear, we shall be like him,  
“ for we shall see him as he is.” The truth is, the  
whole of that epistle seems in the directest manner  
calculated to thwart Dr. Taylor’s scheme. And one  
would think a person of the meanest understand-  
ing, who has read it, would scarce have the con-  
fidence to assert, as that able critic does, c. 12.  
§ 236. that the apostles with one consent, assign  
the blessings of election, adoption, regeneration,  
&c. to all professed Christians without excep-  
tion, never raising any scruple or difficulty about  
any Christian’s interest in or right to them, no  
not in the case of sinning a sin, except that of  
apostacy. However, it must be owned he has  
managed this difficulty with abundance of ad-  
dress. And, if you allow him a liberty, which  
he has unjustly accused the Calvinist divines for  
taking in the case of effectual calling, that, I  
mean, of feigning unscriptural distinctions, his  
scheme is safe, spite of St. John, by a notable  
discovery, that men may be born of God in a  
less, and in a more eminent sense, ch. 11. § 219.  
For, if you insert in John’s epistle *born of God*  
*in the most eminent sense*, then, consistently enough  
with that apostle, men of bad characters, and  
who shall finally perish, may be born of God  
in the less eminent sense, to which the rest of  
the apostles, when they speak of adoption refer ;  
certainly, it is so. And that man must have a  
wretched genius, who if allowed to add words  
and sentences to the bible, cannot bring it with  
ease to speak what language is most agreeable to  
him.

him. The only question is, if indeed that is a question, whether such liberty can be fairly taken. But whether it can, or cannot, Dr. Taylor, after straining at a gnat on another occasion, has in this instance swallowed a camel. He would not understand elect, called, saved, created, sons of God, &c. differently in the Old Testament which related to a typical dispensation, and in the New which relates to the dispensation typified; because it would be a strange abuse of words, to express by the same phrases, ideas not generically the same. But he finds no difficulty in supposing, that two apostles of Christ writing under the same dispensation, affix to the same words ideas totally different, without giving the least hint of this, to prevent men from doing, what without such caution they unavoidably would do, I mean, understanding them as speaking of the same thing.

§ 4. Christians, according to Dr. Taylor, ch. vi. § 100. are said to be *washed* and *sanctified*, because by the will of God, they are set apart and appropriated in a special manner to his honour, service and obedience, and furnished with extraordinary means and motives to holiness— Here permit me to enquire, If these expressions have no higher an import, why did Christ tell his disciples, John xiii. 10. “Ye are clean, “ but not all?” Were they not all especially appropriated to his service, and furnished with extraordinary means and motives to holiness? Yet Christ expressly says, ye are not all clean, because he knew there was a hypocrite among them; and it was not till Judas went out, and none save true believers were present, that he

G 3   says,

says, John xv. 3. " Now ye are clear, through  
" the word which I have spoken unto you."

It is said, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. " Know ye not  
" that the unrighteous shall not inherit the king-  
" dom of God? Be not deceived: neither for-  
" nicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor  
" effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with  
" mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor  
" drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall  
" inherit the kingdom of God. And such were  
" some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are  
" sanctified, but ye are justified in the name  
" of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our  
" God." Does not the opposition between the  
character in the 9th and 10th, and that in the  
11th verse strongly imply, that the washed and  
sanctified, were once the slaves of these shocking  
vices, but after they were washed and sanctified,  
did not, nay could not remain under that wretched  
ed thraldrom?

Again it is said, Tit. iii. 3—5. " For we our-  
" selves also were sometimes foolish and disobey-  
" dient, deceived, serving divers lusts and plea-  
" sures, living in malice and envy, hateful and  
" hating one another. But after that the kind-  
" ness and love of God our Saviour towards  
" man appeared, not by works of righteous-  
" ness, which we have done, but according to  
" his mercy he saved us, by the washing of re-  
" generation and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Is it not clear, from this passage, that men by  
the washing of regeneration, and renewing of  
the Holy Ghost, are saved from the dominion of  
sin, and no more remain as before, foolish, dis-  
obedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and  
pleasures?

§ 5. When church members are said to be saved, this according to our author (*Key*, ch. vi. § 78.) means no more than that they were rescued from idolatry, and brought into the light and privileges of the gospel.—I acknowledge, men are saved, when they come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4. But it is, when they come to such a knowledge of its certainty, beauty, and glory, as purifies the heart, and makes them partakers of a divine nature. The salvation of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 11. means their conversion from sin to God. For Israel's being saved, Rom. xi. 26. is explained by ungodliness being turned away from them. A Jew might be saved from Ægypt. But Christ saves his people from their sins, Matth. i. 21. blesses them in turning away every one of them from their iniquities, Acts iii. 26. and is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, and to none else, Heb. v. 9. The gospel salvation must therefore be far from the wicked, Ps. cxix. 155. I have shewn more at large, in what sense Christ is the Saviour of the world, and Christians partake of salvation in the following Dissertation.

§ 6. Church members in general said to be *justified by faith*. According to Dr. Taylor, this implies no more than deliverance from the power of heathenish darkness, being admitted into the church and covenant of God, and that general pardon, which God granted to the heathen world upon their professed faith in Christ: but by no means relates to, or secures that second justification, or acquittance at the day of judgment, which we are told, is not by faith only, but the issue of a persevering obedience, Matth. xii. 37:

Jam. ii. 24. The substance of his reasoning, in support of this notion, is, The Greek and Hebrew words, which we translate righteousness, when applied to God, frequently signify, that goodness, mercy, favour, by which he saves from any enemy, danger, or evil: and hence are used to signify the deliverance itself, which the benignity of God thus vouchsafes. Conformably to this, to be justified or made righteous, is to be saved from any evil, or to obtain any blessing, whether spiritual or temporal. It is not therefore to be thought strange, if Paul should apply these terms, to the important affair of our deliverance from heathenish darkness, and admission into the church and covenant of God; and the rather, because by that very word, the grant of covenant blessings to Abraham is signified, Gen. xv. 6; because the admission of the Gentiles into the church, is expressed in other terms full as strong, e. g. being saved, Rom. x. 1. xi. 26. 1 Thess. ii. 16; obtaining mercy, Rom. xi. 30. 1 Pet. ii. 10; and the purpose of receiving them into the church is termed election, Rom. ix. 11, 16. xi. 5, 6. Nor was Paul's pains in proving, that by faith only we are received into the church and covenant of God, unnecessary, as the Jews so warmly inculcated, that circumcision and obedience to the law were necessary for that purpose, (Key, ch. 16, 17.)

As to the general pardon granted to the heathen world, upon their professed faith, there is not the least foundation for it in the Bible. God cannot justify and condemn the same persons. But he that believeth not, tho' he may profess to believe, is condemned already. There is now

no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. But against every one who walketh after the flesh, whatever his profession be, a sentence of condemnation stands in full force. I need not however say much in opposition to this notion of justification, as it is another notion of it still lower, deliverance from heathenish darkness and admission into the church and covenant of God, which our author chiefly labours to establish.

To consider all the texts he has cited, in proof that *righteous* signifies merciful and kind, and *righteousness* mercy and benignity, would be tedious. In most of them, these words either denote justice in its common acceptation; or a title to blessings, whether temporal, or spiritual; or that, which finds a title to heavenly blessings, even the sufferings and obedience of Christ. In some of them it means vindictive justice, or the righteousness of God, as pleading the just cause of his people, and avenging them on their enemies. And this is the sense of it, Judg. v. 11. Psal. ciii. 6. Is. li. 27; lvi. 1; lix. 16. Indeed, in the four last texts, the LXX. instead of δικαιοσύνη have ελεημοσύνη or ελεος, as in other passages of that translation, δικαιοσύνη may mean kindness, or mercy. But it is sufficient, that נִזְרָע has no such sense in the Hebrew, except perhaps where it is intimated, that extreme necessity gives a just claim to alms. On which account, Solomon says, Prov. iii. 27. Withold not good נָזַע from the Lords thereof, i. e. from these, whom God constitutes by their necessity the Lords of the withheld good. The mistake of the LXX. might flow from this,

that נְפָלָה signifies the ground of our acceptance with God, which those interpreters, tinctured with that scheme, which afterwards distinguished the sect of the Pharisees, imagined was alms, and other acts of mercy. Just as the Talmudical writers, from the same notion of the merit of good works, term alms נְפָלָה. See Lightfoot horae Hebraicae ad Matth. vi. 1. and Luke xi. 41.

His attempt to prove, that נְקָרֶבֶת may signify to be saved or delivered, is still more feeble: for, in the passages cited by him, that word either signifies, being acquitted from the guilt of sin, and entitled to the divine favour, or having our character vindicated and justified before men. The first of these is the sense of the word, in Isa. xlv. 25. Acts xiii. 39. and Rom. vi. 7. The second in John ii. 25. Dr. Taylor explains that passage thus: “Was not Rahab the harlot justified, (i. e. delivered, or saved from the destruction in which Jericho was involved) by works, when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way.” I stay not to remark, the Doctor’s inconsistency with himself, as he elsewhere asserts, that James, in this chapter, treats of the second justification, or final acquittance at the day of judgment. It is enough to my present purpose, that both interpretations are inconsistent with truth. The evident meaning of the apostle is, “Was not the sanctity of Rahab the harlot’s professed faith in the God of Israel, justified by her receiving the spies, and sending them out another way.” Turn to the immediately preceding verse: “See then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Justified cannot there mean delivered

delivered from outward calamities, for from these neither the faith of Christians, nor their good works deliver. Unless therefore, we charge the apostle, with a strange inaccuracy of method, and abuse of language, he would not argue, that Christians are justified by works, from Rahab's being justified by them, if justified, as applied to her, had an idea noways analogous to what it bears as applied to Christians. Equally clear it is, that James does not speak of a secondary justification in Dr. Taylor's sense of that phrase. For when Rahab had received the messengers, and sent them out another way, she had not as yet preserved her faith and holiness to the end of her life.

It is further pleaded, that justification may mean no more than admission into the church, because that admission is expressed in terms full as strong, e. g. being saved and obtaining mercy; nay, the purpose of that admission is termed election.—Which of these phrases is strongest, I will not determine. The weakest of them is too strong, to import admission to the church, as understood by the Doctor. But if you understand by the church, what the apostles understood by it, I shall be as free as any to acknowledge, that election means the divine purpose of bestowing upon men church privileges, justification the being intitled to them, and salvation and obtaining mercy the actual enjoyment of them.

If the Jews asserted that circumcision and obedience to the law, were necessary for admission to God's church and covenant, they also asserted that they were necessary to entitle to eternal life. It cannot therefore be inferred from their sentiments,

ments, that the first is the sense of justification, rather than the second.

But the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans is a sufficient confutation of the notion, that justification by faith does not secure acquittance at the day of judgment. The apostle having established in the preceding chapters, that grand and important doctrine of Christianity, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, infers from it, in the fifth chapter, the happiness of the justified, particularly in verse 2. their rejoicing in hope of future glory. And that this joy had a solid foundation, or, in other words, that the justified could not fail of attaining eternal life, he proves from four arguments. (1.) Because even tribulation, which was a curse under the Sinai covenant, was to believers in Jesus a real blessing, ver. 3,—5. (2.) Because that love, which God bears them, and, in consequence of which, they shall be eternally happy, is ascertained to them, and the joyful sense of it shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, ver. 5. at the end. (3.) If the effect of the death of Christ was, that thereby ungodly sinners and enemies were justified and reconciled: much more, through the life of Christ, shall those now reconciled, be eternally happy, ver. 6—11. The Doctor himself thus paraphrases the latter part of ver. 10. “ Much more now, that we are actually turned to God, by receiving the gospel preached to us; may we assure ourselves, “ we shall obtain eternal salvation, by that life “ and power to which our Saviour is exalted.” (4.) If by Adam’s first sin, not only a sentence of condemnation was passed on his posterity, but the

the penal effects thereof have actually reached them, in consequence of his sin being imputed to them, much more shall the blessings merited by Christ's obedience, be conferred on all for whom he obeyed. Thus the whole of that chapter seems directly calculated, to confute Dr. Taylor's scheme, that the justified may finally perish.

He has indeed endeavoured to give that chapter a very different turn. According to him, ver. 11—21. contains a third argument, that divine grace and justification reach to all mankind, even uncircumcised Gentiles as well as the Jews; which may be reduced to this syllogism. The consequences of Christ's obedience extend as far as those of Adam's disobedience. But the consequences of Adam's disobedience extend to all mankind. Therefore, so do the consequences of Christ's obedience.—Need I tell my reader, what is extremely obvious, that this would be proving a thing, by taking it for granted? For, if the Jews denied, that the Gentiles were justified by faith, they equally denied that Christ's obedience was the foundation of justification or church privileges; imagining those privileges founded, either on their own merit, the merit of their fore-fathers, or the particular affection of God for their nation.

But the true sense of justification, as importing a complete and effectual right to the pardon of sin, and to all the blessings of grace and glory, through the blood and merits of Jesus, has been so fully vindicated, and the distinction of a first and secondary justification, so thoroughly refuted, by a multitude of Calvinist and Lutheran divines, in their writings against Papists and Arminians, and

and in their systems of divinity, that my entring upon that argument is happily superseded.

## S E C T I O N VIII.

§ 1. THERE are some Scriptures, in Dr. Taylor's pompous collection of texts, which merit particular remark, as on a superficial view, they may appear to give considerable countenance to his scheme.

Contentions are enumerated among the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. and yet it is said of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 11. There are contentions among you ; and iii. 3. Whereas there are among you envyings and strifes, and divisions, are ye not carnal ? And vi. 8. Ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. (Key, chap. x. § 158.)—This is no doubt meant to insinuate, that some in the church of Corinth lived after the flesh, and were habitually unjust. Had that been indeed the case, after the apostle had solemnly declared, that the unrighteous and voluptuous are excluded from the kingdom of God, would he have added ? Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, &c. i. e. once you were among the unrighteous and voluptuous, but now ye are of another and a better spirit and behaviour. Would he not rather have told them, as truth and ministerial faithfulness required, such are some of you ? Indeed there is little difficulty in the case. Solomon tells us, Eccles. vii. 20. There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. And Paul, Gal. v. 17. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh : and

these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Let the first epistle to the Corinthians explain itself, iii. 2. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. By carnality he means the weakness, not the want of a principle of divine life in their hearts. And from this carnality, daily experience shews, the greatest part of sincere Christians can seldom get wholly free. Again ; The doing wrong and defrauding, with which he charges them, was going to law with their brethren, before unbelievers, 1 Cor. vi. 6—8. This was doing wrong to the church, and defrauding it of due honour ; for it was insinuating, that therero was not a wise man among them, able to judge between his brethren. And it might often be doing wrong to the brother, with whom they went to law. This was surely a fault, yet, probably, not a presumptuous one. Self-interest, as well as a bribe, blindeth the eyes of the wife, and leadeth men to fancy a clear title, where, in fact, there is none.

The apostle supposes the Galatians in great danger of finishing in the flesh, Gal. iii. 3. of falling from grace, and of having Christ become of no effect to them, Gal. v. 4. Key, chap. x. § 166.—The meaning of the first passage is evidently this. Having embraced Christianity, and received in consequence of this the saving influences and miraculous gifts of the spirit, do you think to perfect your condition by returning to that carnal dispensation, in which there was no such ministration of the word ?—The other passage is not an address to true Christians. He had indeed said to them, ver. 2. If ye be circumcised,

cised, Christ shall profit you nothing. He warns them of their danger, being jealous over them with a godly jealousy. Yet he entertained good hopes of them, ver. 10. "I have confidence in "you through the Lord, that ye will be none "otherwise minded." From them he turns to such, who, though they had not renounced the Christian name, yet had apostatized from the true gospel of Christ, or were enticing others to such apostacy, ver. 3, 4. "For I testify again to every "man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor "to the whole law. Christ is become of no "effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified "by the law, ye are fallen from grace," i. e. ye are fallen from the doctrine of grace. And then he returns again to true Christians, whom he opposes to those whom he had thus warned, ver. 5. "For we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope "of righteousness by faith."

2 Peter ii. 22—23. speaks of Christians, who had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ, and were again entangled therein and overcome, and after having known the way of righteousness, have turned aside from the holy commandment. Key, chap. xi. § 215.—It speaks of men who had done so. But least we should imagine, that these men were ever real Christians, renewed in the spirit of their minds, he assigns it as the cause of their apostacy, that their doggish and swinish nature had always remained the same, and that their reformation and good behaviour was meerly external, ver. 22. "It is happened to them according to the true "proverb, the dog is turned to his vomit again, "and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing "in the mire."

Paul

Paul tells Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 10. "I endure  
" all things for the Elect's sake, that they may  
" also obtain the Salvation, which is Christ Jesus,  
" with eternal glory." This shews, it is one  
thing to be elect; and another thing to obtain  
that salvation which is connected with eternal  
glory, Key, chap. xi. § 195.—Undoubtedly it  
does. But does it also shew, that those privi-  
leges, though different, are not necessarily con-  
nected? To prove this, would have been more  
for the Doctor's purpose; but, I apprehend, not  
so easy. This passage no more proves, that the  
elect may fail of eternal glory, than Christ's en-  
during suffering, that God might be glorified in  
man's salvation, proves, that the whole of man-  
kind may eternally perish, and God reap no glory  
from that astonishing transaction.

§ 2. Dr. Taylor's scheme obliges him to con-  
sider grace to persevere in religion, as a privi-  
lege not necessarily connected with election,  
adoption, vocation, and other blessings, which  
he calls antecedent: but as consequent blessings,  
depending on the precarious condition of our im-  
provement of the antecedent blessings, common  
to all Christians. Accordingly, he places, in his  
collection of texts relating to ~~antecedent~~<sup>consequent</sup> bles-  
sings, these following: 1 Cor. i. 8. "Who  
" shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may  
" be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus  
" Christ." 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. "And the very  
" God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray  
" God your whole spirit and soul, and body, be  
" preserved blameless unto the coming of our  
" Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth  
" you, who also will do it." 2 Thess. iii. 3.  
" But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you  
" and

"and keep you from evil." Phil. i. 6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."—And yet these promises plainly relate to church-members without exception, at least as much as the epithets elect, sanctified, &c. do. The Doctor, however, judged wisely in overlooking this circumstance, which, if he attended to, he could not but be conscious, would do no service to his scheme of sanctified Christians eternally perishing. For if his collection of texts, on antecedent blessings, proves, that all to whom the apostles directed their epistles, was considered by them as elected, sanctified, called, &c. which I readily allow; these texts equally prove, that persevering grace was a part of the common portion of Christians.



## DISSERTATION III.

### *The Nature of CHRISTIAN FAITH.*

#### S E C T I O N I.

§ I. **F**AITH or Belief, in strict propriety of speech, is that credit we give to the testimony of one, in whose knowledge of what he testifies, and in whose integrity we confide. Though often it is used in a sense less proper, and denotes in general persuasion or assent, whether founded upon testimony or intrinsic evidence.

The Holy Ghost in the sacred oracles means to be understood, and therefore speaks to men in their own language, and uses words in their common acceptation. Faith therefore in the Scripture does not signify, choice, affection, temper, or behaviour; for, in common language, it does not signify these: but merely persuasion or assent, and commonly a persuasion founded on testimony.

The meaning of the word *believe*, in the following Scriptures, is plain to the most cursory reader: Exod. iv. 1. But behold they will not believe me. *ib.* ver. 5. That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers hath appeared unto thee. 1 Sam. xxvii. 12. And Achish believed David, saying, he hath made his people Israel

Israel utterly to abhor him. Prov. xxvi. 25. When he speaketh fair, believe him not. Habuk. i. 5. I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. John iv. 21. Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. James ii. 19. Thou believest that there is one God; the devils also believe, and tremble. I may venture to say, if Christians had consulted systems less, and Scripture and their own experience more, they would not have affixed to believing in other passages, a sense entirely different from what it bears in these.

Faith purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9. worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. and discovers itself sincere by the performance of good works, Ja. ii. 18. Faith therefore is not holiness, love, or new obedience, unless the effect is the same with the cause, or the evidence with the thing proved. He who confounds faith with any of these, might as well plead, that there is no difference between the sun in the firmament, and the fruits of the earth, brought forth and ripened by his genial rays: or between natural life, and the actions of a living man. And yet many writers, on the nature of faith, seem to have forgot that it is one question, what is faith; and another, what is inseparably connected with it, and what are the fruits that spring from it?

That saving faith is properly an assent, is further evident, because it is often termed knowledge: Isa. liii. 11. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. John xxi. 3. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. 1 Tim. ii. 4. Who will have all men to be saved, and to come

come to the knowledge of the truth. 2 Pet. i. 2, 3. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord ; according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to virtue and glory. In these passages knowledge must mean faith, because the distinguishing properties, attendants, and consequences of faith, are ascribed to it, in them. In other Scriptures, knowledge means a clear undoubted persuasion. Thus, 2 Cor. v. 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. 1 Thess. v. 2. For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh, as a thief in the night. 2 Tim. i. 12. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 1 John ii. 21. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth : but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Why then should not knowledge mean persuasion, in the Scriptures, where it is put for faith ?

§ 2. Other ideas of faith, substituted in the place of persuasion, are better calculated to flatter the pride of man, that his acceptance with God is founded on something worthy and excellent in the frame of his mind, in the choice of his will, and in the byass of his affections. For that very reason, these ideas must be false. The office assigned to faith in the plan of salvation, is assigned it for this purpose, that all pretences to merit may be borne down, and the sovereignty and freedom of God's grace in bestowing salvation may appear. Rom. iv. 16. " Therefore it is

"is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith has no moral efficacy towards procuring our pardon and acceptance.

To this reasoning an able writer has objected, that a self-righteous heart may make a righteousness of a passive, as well as of an active faith, and be as proud of his passivity, as the Pharisee was of his fasting twice in the week.—But, is there not a mighty difference, between fasting, in which you abstain from what is desirable, or suffer what is painful, from a free choice which you imagine virtuous; and the assenting to a truth, when that assent is constrained by evidence. If one is proud of the last, may he not with equal reason be proud, that he believes the sun is in the firmament, when his eyes are struck with the meridian splendor of that glorious luminary?

§ 3. Assent or persuasion is the only notion of faith, which, without straining, will apply to every Scripture, where any kind of faith is mentioned. Let the unbiassed reader consult his Bible, and judge for himself.

To leave no room for dispute, an inspired author has given us a description of the faith by which the just live. Heb. xi. 1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." While worldly men see through a false medium, even things present and visible, and are blind to their true nature and consequences; faith renders invisible things visible, and absent things present. It gives so lively and realizing a representation of things hoped for, that they seem, as it were, actually existing before us. Our persuasion of them is as undoubted, as if we saw them with our bodily eyes, or had a mathematical demonstration of their reality. With Stephen,

phen, faith sees the heavens open, and Jesus standing at the right-hand of God: nay, with Paul, it is caught up into the third heaven, and hears the praises of the redeemed. Its piercing eyes penetrate into that within the veil, whether the Forerunner has for us entered: and there behold the King in his beauty, and the land that is yet afar off. Nor is there in this any thing incredible. When we are firmly persuaded of any thing, in its own nature important and affecting, and appearing so to us, the mind is naturally led to contemplate it so steadily, that it impresses us, in some measure, as if it were already existing, present with us, and visible to our bodily eye. Faith is like those glasses, which give important and undoubted, though not full and distinct discoveries of objects, which our sight, without such assistance, could not perceive.

Dr. Owen, in his Catechism, has judiciously decided the question, I am now canvassing. Faith (says he) is in the understanding, in respect of its being and subsistence: in the will and heart, in respect of its effectual workings.

§ 4. It does not invalidate my reasoning, that it is said, Rom. x. 10. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The heart is there opposed, not to the assent of the understanding, but to the profession of the lips; for it immediately follows, "And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Nor are other places wanting, in the sacred oracles, where the heart means the intellectual powers. Thus Exod. xxviii. 3. "Thou shalt speak unto all the wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments." Deut. xxix. 4. "Yet the Lord hath

“ hath not given you an heart to perceive, and  
 “ eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.”  
 1 Kings iv. 29. “ And God gave Solomon wis-  
 “ dom and understanding exceeding much, and  
 “ largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on  
 “ the sea-shore.”

## SECTION II.

§ 1. SUPPOSING it sufficiently proved, that the general idea of saving faith is assent or persuasion; two things are necessary to be examined on this subject. First, What are the truths to which saving faith assents? Secondly, If there is any thing in the nature and foundation of the assent of saving faith, specifically different from the assent of unconverted sinners.

It is proper, in the first place, to investigate what are the truths to which saving faith necessarily assents. We are told, Rom. x. 17. “ Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” And 1 John v. 10. “ He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” Faith therefore is a persuasion of something testified in the word of God, which was true in itself, and of which such evidence was laid before us, that we had ground to believe it true, even while yet we did not discern that evidence, and actually believe it: nay, which would have remained true, though we had continued to reject the divine testimony. We may here apply the words of Paul, Rom. iii. 3. “ What if some do not believe?

“ believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith “ of God of none effect.” Faith therefore can-“ not be a persuasion, that Christ died for me in particular, or that my sins are forgiven through his blood. For this is no where testified in the word of God. No unbeliever has sufficient evidence of this laid before him. And, if he dies in unbelief, it is a falsehood. When the Scripture speaks of our being justified by faith, to suppose this means, we obtain justification by a persuasion we are already justified, is ridiculously absurd. I shall say no more of that hypothesis, as several accurate writers have sufficiently exposed it (*a*), and many good men who have espoused it, seem to entertain a sentiment very different from that, which their words, taken in their obvious and natural sense, certainly convey. Faith then is an assent to something revealed, and that was true, previous to our believing it.

§ 2. Further. Faith is not a general implicit assent to Christianity, or to what is contained in the sacred oracles. Men may have that, without understanding, what in Christianity is most important. But saving faith, is a knowing what and in whom we believe, 1 Tim. i. 12. There is a seeing the Son, which, in order of nature, precedes believing on him, John vi. 40. God reveals by his Spirit, these mysteries of divine love, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, so that Christians know the things freely given

(*a*) See Lampii *Dissertationes Amst.* 1737, t. 1. Diff. 14. de fiducia. President Dickinson's *Familiar Letters*. Letter 11. and Mr. Bellamy's *Theron, Paulinus & Aspasio*.

them of God, which natural men cannot know, because they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 9,—14. The spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shews them to men, John xvi. 14. and opens mens eyes, and turns them from darkness to light, that they may receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus, Acts xxvi. 18. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the father, declares him, John i. 18. and manifests his name to the men given him out of the world, John xvii. 6. so that they all know God from the least to the greatest, Heb. viii. 11. And indeed, faith could not have that influence on the temper and conduct, which the Scripture ascribes to it, if it did not include some degree of knowledge and apprehension of what is believed. For truths, however interesting in their own nature, can no how engage the will and affections, unless they are understood. Our Lord charges the Jews, John v. 47. with not believing Moses's writings. They did not call in question their divine inspiration; but the most important truths contained in them, they rejected as false. He therefore believes in our Lord's sense of the word, who rightly understands the divine testimony, and receives and credits it in its genuine meaning, not mistaking, altering, or adding to the sense of it.

§ 3. No man thoroughly understands the whole of the Christian revelation, and therefore no man assents to it, ~~without~~ with a general implicit assent. I acknowledge, ~~the~~ belief of any truth, known to be a part of divine revelation, is a damnable sin. But is, therefore, the headach and death of the son of the Shunamite, and Elisha's restoring him to life again, as essential an article of faith, as that

that Christ died for our offences, and rose again for our justification? Or is ignorance, that Giddalти was the son of Heman, or Noah the sister of Hoglah, as dangerous, as ignorance that Jesus is the Son of God? The Romanists therefore err, who make divine revelation, in general, the object of saving faith. Such a general implicit assent to divine revelation, without understanding what it contains, will not produce conviction of sin in the thoughtless and secure, will not command peace of conscience to the wounded in spirit, and will excite no man to holiness of heart and life. An implicit assent to the Bible, and an implicit assent to the Alcoran; a believing an unknown something, which I call Christianity, or an unknown something which I call Mahometanism, are nearly allied, and equally useless.

If it is absurd to suppose, that every thing in the Bible is fundamental, it is still more absurd to imagine, that nothing is so. A religion, in which nothing is necessary, must itself be needless. And therefore in the ignorance, or neglect, of such religion, there can be little harm.

What are the truths thus necessary to be believed, can be learned with certainty only from the sacred oracles. And here our enquiries are happily reduced to a narrow compass, as there is one radical comprehensive truth, assent to which is represented as saving faith, and which supposes, includes, or necessarily infers every other truth thus fundamental. That truth is expressed in a variety of language, in different passages of Scripture, and will be best learned by surveying some of them.

§ 4. I begin with Scriptures, in which this comprehensive fundamental article is termed *The Truth*, to intimate, that of all truths it is the

most necessary and important. John i. 17. “ The law was given by Moses, but the grace and the truth came by Jesus Christ,” i. e. All saving mercies are dispensed through the blood and merits of Christ: and he hath given a clear revelation of these counsels of divine wisdom for man’s salvation, which, during the Old Testament dispensation, were hid under obscure prophecies and figures. *The truth* may particularly refer to what was asserted, ver. 14, 16. “ The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

John viii. 31, 32. “ Then said Jesus to those Jews, which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Here it is natural to suppose that Christ by *my word*, ver. 31. and the truth, ver. 32. intends *the truth*, he had been just then uttering: that he was in the beginning of all things, ver. 25; (b) and not of this world, ver. 23; and consequently prior to and distinct from every creature; and that he was sent by the Father to be the light

(b) There is considerable difficulty in our Lord’s words. John viii. 25. την αρχην ο τι και λαλω εμιν. There seem two ellipses in the first part of these words to be thus supplied, κατα την αρχην ειμι, &c. And the passage may be thus rendered. “ In the beginning I am, which is that which even now I declare (i. e. have declared) to you.” This interpretation has been learnedly defended by Lamp, Dissertationes, t. 1. Disl. 17. ad locum John viii. 25.

of the world, and to save men from their sins, by being lifted up on a cross; but that those who believed not this testimony of him should die in their sins, ver. 12, 18, 24, 26, 28, 29.

John xvii. 19. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified thro' the truth." Some of the truths mentioned in the context are: that the Father sent the Son into the world: that the Son glorified the Father on earth, and finished the work, which the Father gave him to do; that the Father hath given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him; or in fewer words, that for the sake of those given him of the Father he sanctified himself, ver. 3, 4, 2, 19. first clause. Two verses before, Christ had termed that same doctrine the Father's truth. "Sanctify them thro' thy truth, thy word is truth." The truth, which reveals the decrees and will of the Father, in that scheme of grace for man's redemption, which could never have been known without revelation, and which appears every way so worthy the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, and so brightly displays his glory, that its excellency points out its author, and to which the Father hath born witness, both by the prophets, and a voice from heaven.

Eph. i. 13. "In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Here the last expression sufficiently explains the first.

1 John ii. 4. "He that saith, I know him (viz. Jesus) and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Here the truth means what was asserted, ver.

1, 2. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with  
"the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and  
"he is the propitiation for our sins; and not  
"for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole  
"world."

1 John ii. 21. "I have not written unto  
"you, because ye know not the truth, but be-  
"cause ye know it, and that no lie is of the  
"truth." We may learn, what is the truth  
from ver. 22. where the apostle tells us, the  
lie opposite to it. "Who is a liar, but he  
"that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is  
"antichrist that denieth the Father and the  
"Son." The lie is a denying the Messiahship  
or Sonship of Christ. The truth therefore is,  
that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living  
God.

2 John 1, 2. "The elder unto the elect lady  
"and her children, whom I love in the truth,  
"and not I only, but also all they that have  
"known the truth; for the truth's sake which  
"dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever."  
Ver. 7. points out to what truth he refers.  
"For many deceivers are entered into the world,  
"who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in  
"the flesh."

All these scriptures lead to one conclusion,  
that the only begotten of the Father was sent by  
him to this wretched world, to be the propitia-  
tion and advocate of sinners: and that a fullness  
of grace dwells in him, and power is given him  
over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to  
those given him of the Father. This doctrine is  
with peculiar propriety termed the truth. In it  
the prophecies of the Old Testament, and types  
of the law, have their true and full accomplish-  
ment.

ment. There is a glory in it, which demonstrates its divine original, and that it is indeed the truth of God. By it Christianity is distinguished from all other religions. The belief of it constitutes men true Christians, and renews and sanctifies their hearts. It is the truth which glorifies God, and saves man. And here I can freely adopt the words of Mr. Glass's Testimony, c. v. Sect. 2. "It takes no more to make any man a subject of Christ's kingdom, but to be of this truth, and it requires no less. In this truth, all Christ's subjects are one, however otherwise differenced. They have different measures of light, whence differences of opinion and practice will be found among them, and they are liable to error in many cases, while they are in this world. But they are every one of this truth, tho' they may have different speculations about it, and controversies of words, while the truth itself reigns in all their hearts." Whether that ingenious writer, and those who stand connected with him in church fellowship, still adhere to these truly scriptural, and catholic principles, or whether they have since renounced them, is an historical question, which it is not my business, and indeed, which I have neither ability nor inclination to discuss.

§ 5. In a variety of scriptures, faith is described as a persuasion of the Messiahship and Sonship of Christ. Matth. xvi. 16, 17. "Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ the son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

John vi. 69. "And we believe, and are sure,  
" that thou art that Christ, the son of the liv-  
" ing God." John xi. 27. "I believe that  
" thou art the Christ the Son of God,  
" which should come into the world." John  
xx. 31. "But these are written, that ye might  
" believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of  
" God, and that believing, ye might have life  
" through his name." Acts viii. 37. "And  
" Philip said, if thou believest with all thine  
" heart, thou mayest. And he answered and  
" said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of  
" God." 1 John v. 1. "Whosoever believeth  
" that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."  
Ib. ver. 5. "Who is he that overcometh the  
" world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the  
" Son of God." Mr. Lock, in his Reasonable-  
ness of Christianity, has largely and unanswer-  
ably proved, that this proposition, *Jesus is the*  
*Christ, the Son of the living God*, was the only one,  
the belief whereof was necessary to constitute  
a Christian, and therefore was the grand doc-  
trine preached by the apostles to infidels, and  
in support of which both Christ and his apostles  
wrought their miracles. But as that great phi-  
losopher observes, *Second Vindication of the Reason-  
ableness of Christianity, folio edition, p. 583.* "A  
" man cannot possibly give his assent to any af-  
" firmation or negation, unless he understands the  
" terms, as they are joined in that proposition,  
" and has a conception of the thing affirmed or  
" denied, and also of the thing concerning  
" which it is affirmed or denied, as they are put  
" together." To believe therefore, that Jesus  
is the Christ the Son of the living God, cannot  
avail us, if by these terms we understand no-  
thing,

thing, or something different from what is signified by them in the sacred oracles.

§ 6. The belief that Jesus is the Christ, which constitutes one a Christian, implies something more than belief that Jesus is a divine teacher. Nicodemus believed that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. And yet he was not born again, or a true Christian, for our Lord particularly applies to him, what he had before asserted in general, as to the necessity of regeneration. John iii. 7. "Marvel not, that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

The meaning of the name Christ or anointed, may be learned from these places of the Old Testament, in which it is given to the promised Saviour. Such as 1 Sam. ii. 10. "The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." Ps. ii. 2, 6, 12. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his anointed. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Kiss the Son, least he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Ps. xlvi. 7. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Ps. lxxxiv. 9. "Behold O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." Ps. cxxxii. 10. "For thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed." Ib. ver. 17, 18. "There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine

“ mine anointed. His enemies will I cloath  
“ with shame: but upon himself shall his  
“ crown flourish.” Is. lxi. 1—3. “ The spirit  
“ of the Lord God is upon me, because the  
“ LORD hath anointed me to preach good  
“ tidings to the meek, he hath sent me to bind  
“ up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to  
“ the captives, and the opening of the prison  
“ to them that are bound: To proclaim the  
“ acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of  
“ vengeance of our God, to comfort all that  
“ mourn: To appoint unto them that mourn  
“ in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes,  
“ the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of  
“ praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they  
“ might be called trees of righteousness, the  
“ planting of the LORD, that he might be  
“ glorified.” Dan. ix. 24 — 26. “ Seventy  
“ weeks are determined upon thy people, and  
“ upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression,  
“ and to make an end of sins, and to make  
“ reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in  
“ everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the  
“ vision and prophey, and to anoint the most  
“ holy. Know therefore and understand, that  
“ from the going forth of the commandment  
“ to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Mes-  
“ siah the prince, shall be seven weeks, and  
“ threescore and two weeks the street shall be  
“ built again, and the wall even in troublous  
“ times. And after threescore and two weeks:  
“ shall Messiah be cut off, but not for him-  
“ self.” From these places it is evident, that  
the Son of God, as the glorious antitype of  
those anointed under the Old Testament, should  
be anointed with the Holy Ghost, publish salvation

tion as a prophet, purchase it as a priest, and bestow it as a king : that God's looking on the face of his anointed, who made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, is man's full and only encouragement to hope for every blessing : that the enemies of this anointed one shall be cloathed with shame, and that these are blessed who put their trust in him. These, and many important particulars of the same nature, might be still farther illustrated and confirmed from Ps. xxii. and cx. Is. xi, xlix, liii. Zach. iii. 8, 9 ; vi. 12. 13 ; ix. 9—12 ; xiii. 7. and a variety of other scriptures, which it would too much swell these sheets to transcribe.

§ 7. Let us next enquire, in what sense, we must believe, that Jesus is the Son of God. For Christ and Son of God, do not mean precisely the same thing : Else, Matth. xvi. 16; xxvi. 63. John xi. 27; xx. 31. 2 Cor. i. 19. 1 John i. 3, 7. where both these titles are in the same sentence ascribed to Jesus, must needs appear vain and useless repetitions, unworthy of the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. Besides, we are told, Acts ix. 20. that Paul “ preached Christ “ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” Surely this cannot mean, he preached that Christ was Christ. So great a master of reasoning, not to say an inspired Apostle, was incapable of solemnly asserting and proving a merely identical proposition. Indeed, if Christ had been used as a proper name in the apostolical times, as it is in modern writings, my reasoning would not be conclusive. But in fact, Jesus, the name given our Lord at his circumcision, was the only name by which unbelievers then spoke of him. What

Paul preached to the Jews, was therefore this, that the promised Messiah is no less a person than the Son of God. The prophets, had ascribed both titles to the Redeemer. And the high priest was probably sensible of this, when he adjured Jesus by the living God, to tell whether he was the Christ the Son of God. Matth. xxvi. 63. Yet it was more obscure, that the promised Redeemer was the Son of God, in that full emphasis of the title, which includes his divine nature, than that God was to anoint him in a peculiar manner with the Holy Ghost. The charge of blasphemy against Jesus, was not founded on his claiming the character of Messias, but on his styling himself the Son of God. See John v. 18; x. 33. Had it not been for this last claim, it is probable, that the Jews with less difficulty would have admitted the first. They easily perceived, that if the Messias was indeed God, he was infinitely superior to Moses, and therefore had power to abolish Moses's law, and to erect a spiritual and heavenly kingdom in its room. That consequence they detested, and thus were led to reject the principle from which it flowed. With good reason therefore, did Jesus and his apostles insist upon it, as a term of discipleship, that Jesus should be acknowledged not only as the Christ, but as the Son of God. These very Jews, who believed that Jesus was the prophet that should come into the world, and were designed to take him by force, and make him a king, yet could not bear the assertion that he came from heaven. And it was in distinction from those who stumbled at that doctrine, that Peter professed in the name of the twelve apostles, " We believe and are  
" sure;

"sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. See John vi. 14, 15, 41, 42, 66—69.

We read, Matth. xiv. 33. "Then they that were in the ship, came and worshipped him, (i. e. Jesus) saying; of a truth, thou art the Son of God." And John ix. 35—38. "Jesus heard that they had cast him (*viz. the blind man*) out, and when he had found him, he said unto him, dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him." Here we see that those in the ship with Jesus, and the blind man, looked upon Jesus as the Son of God, and entitled in that capacity to divine adoration. If it was without ground they had imagined, that the title *Son of God* imported divinity; or if they had worshipped Jesus without regarding him as God, he would have accosted them with some such question, as he put to the young man, Matth. xix. 16, 17. "Why callst thou me good? There is none good, but one, that is God." I acknowledge the word *προσκύνειν* sometimes means only such civil homage as was paid to the eastern monarchs. But not to observe, that the Jews in that age, had no custom of expressing their honouring princes by any such rite; it is plain, there was nothing in our Lord's outward appearance royal and majestic, and therefore the homage paid him, was evidently paid him as Son of God. And that such adoration was not to be given to a fellow creature, is plain from Rev. xxii. 8, 9. "And I

“ I John saw these things and heard them. And  
 “ when I had heard and seen, I fell down to  
 “ worship, before the feet of the angel, which  
 “ shewed me these things. Then saith he unto  
 “ me, see thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-  
 “ servant, and of thy brethren the prophets,  
 “ and of them which keep the sayings of this  
 “ book : worship God.”

If the title *Son of God* did not in the apprehension of the Jews import divinity, Jesus, when he thus addressed them, John x. 36. “ Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest : because I said, I am the Son of God ?” must be supposed to have accused them of saying what they had not said, and of founding the charge of blasphemy where they had not founded it. And if this apprehension of the Jews was a wrong one, and the title *Son of God* imported something created, hardly can it be thought, our Lord would have said nothing to remove that stumbling-block out of their way.

We must therefore believe, that the Messias is the Son of God in the fullest and most emphatical sense of the word: On this account the article is added, John vi. 69., ὁνειρούσας, and Jesus is termed, John iii. 16. “ God’s only begotten Son,” i. e. the Son of God in a sense incomunicable to any creature, and which has not, nay, cannot have any thing parallel to it in universal nature. A parent of many children divides among them his honours and possessions, and does not give all to any one. But to an only begotten son, a parent gives all that he has to give without exception. The name, therefore, Only begotten Son of God, intimates, that the glory.

glory of the Son is as great as that of the Father, and that all things whatsoever the Father hath, are his. Possibly to some it may appear a speculative point of small importance, that he who came in the name of the Lord to save us, was indeed the equal and fellow of the Almighty. But the Scripture lays upon this the greatest stress, as an evidence that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, and an encouragement to rely on him for salvation. And saving faith accordingly views him as a person of infinite dignity, and therefore able to bear the weight of the Father's anger, to quench the fire of vindictive justice ; to begin, carry on, and complete the recovery of defiled and diseased souls ; and to make his people conquerors, and more than conquerors, of all their enemies. Let me appeal to a few Scripture prophecies, Isa. xiii. 2, 3. " Behold, God is my salvation : I will trust and not be afraid ; for the LORD Jehovah is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isa. xxvi. 4. " Trust ye in the LORD for ever : for in the LORD Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isa. xlvi. 22, 24. " Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength." Zech. xii. 1, 10. " Thus saith the LORD which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him, I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."

“ ced.” So that what was given to Israel after the flesh, as a security of their deliverance from Babylon, may well be applied to the redemption from sin and satan thereby typified. Jer. l. 34. “ Their Redeemer is strong, the LORD of hosts is his name, he shall thoroughly plead their cause.” The New Testament throws still a clearer light on this interesting subject. Rom. v. 10. “ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son : much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.” Heb. i. 2, 3. “ God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high.” Heb. iv. 14, 16. “ Seeing then, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, &c.” Heb. vii. 28. “ For the law maketh *men* high priests which have infirmity ; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.” Heb. ix. 14. “ How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works.” 1 John i. 7. “ And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” We are taught, Ephes. iv. 13. that the members of Christ’s mystical body, “ all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge

"ledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This knowledge of Jesus as Son of God, and nothing less than this, lays the foundation for a trust in him absolutely unlimited. Without it we must have apprehensions infinitely unsuitable, of the love and condescension of the Son in coming to save us, of the love of the Father in sending his Son, and of the assurance he has given by bestowing this chief and unspeakable gift, that with him he will freely give us all things. See John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 9, 10. Rev. i. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 32. At the same time, the necessity of shedding blood so infinitely precious for man's redemption, gives us the highest possible proof of the infinite evil of sin, of the spotless purity and tremendous justice of God, and thus of the need we have to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. See 1 Pet. i. 17—19.

§ 8. Faith is described, Isa. liii. 1. as a believing the gospel report; and of that report we have a comprehensive abstract, 1 John iv. 14. "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This nearly co-incides with the former description. The Father's sending the Son is much the same with his anointing him; and the Son's being Saviour of the world, is the same with his executing the offices to which he was anointed for their salvation. Let us however consider the precise immediate meaning of the Father sending the Son to be the Saviour of the world. The words *σωζειν* and *σωζεθαι* are used in the New Testament and in the Septuagint, not only for deliverance out of evil, but for preservation from it by continual protection. See Psal. xxxvi. 7. Gen. xix.

xix. 19, 22. 1 Sam. xix. 12. Matth. xxiv. 22. John xi. 12. Acts xxvii. 20, 21. Matth. viii. 25. And this perhaps is the sense of the word, 1 Tim. iv. 14. where God is termed the Saviour, i. e. Preserver of all men, especially of them that believe. The name Σωτηρ, was often given by the Greeks to Princes, to signify that they had been blessings and benefactors to their subjects. And the LXX. use it instead of the word ΧΩΡΙ, which imports not only the removal of evil, but the restoring of happiness, so that it shall not be lost any more. See Deut. xxxiii. 29. Isa. xlvi. 17. The name Joshua was given by divine direction, not to the deliverer of Israel out of Egypt, but to him who put them in possession of the land of Canaan. Saving, Luke xviii. 42. means recovering sight. And, Acts iv. 9. σωτηρια is rendered in our English version made whole. It is natural therefore to understand salvation in the largest sense, in passages which prophecy of the Messias as a Saviour, e. g. Gen. xl ix. 18. Isa. xii. 2. lli. 9, 10. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. And, in fact, the salvation purchased and applied by Christ includes, (1.) Deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin, and restoration to the favour of God. See 1 Thess. i. 10. Ephes. i. 7. The Greeks termed a sentence of absolution απολύτη, and saving is opposed to condemning, John iii. 17. Mark xvi. 16. (2.) Deliverance even in this life from the power and dominion of sin, and a begun conformity to God's image, Matth. i. 21. Tit. ii. 14. (3.) A deliverance at last from all the remains of sin and sorrow, and the possession of fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore, 1 John v. 10, 11. Hence faith is described, Heb. xi. as a lively realizing persuasion of the glories of an unseen world, leading men from desire of that

that better country and respect to the recompence of reward, to renounce the pleasures of sin, and to suffer affliction with the people of God. And they who have the spirit of faith are represented, 2 Cor. iv. 13, 18. as looking at the things which are unseen and eternal. It must not be forgot, that the gospel-testimony exhibits Christ as sent by the Father, and faith respects him as the Father's ordinance for man's salvation. See John v. 24. vi. 29. xii. 44. xvi. 27. xvii. 8. Rom. iii. 23 —25. His resurrection from the dead, was not only an attestation of his divine mission, but a declaration that he had done and suffered all that was necessary for man's salvation. And, therefore, saving faith is described, Rom. x. 9. as a believing in the heart, that God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. And Peter addresses the Christians to whom he wrote, 1 ep. i. 21. as by Christ believing in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that their faith and hope might be in God.

§ 9. Saving faith is represented as a believing on Christ's name, John i. 12. iii. 18. Acts x. 43. 1 John v. 13. What is termed, Matth. xii. 21. trusting in Christ's name is termed, Isa. xlvi. 4. waiting for his law. By both expressions we are to understand, the law that was to go forth out of Zion, Isa. ii. 3. even the law of faith, Rom. iii. 27. or, in plainer words, the doctrine of the gospel, by which Christ manifests himself to men. This is Christ's name, which Paul was to bear before the Gentiles, and for the sake of which he was to suffer great things, Acts ix. 15, 16. And we are told, Acts viii. 12. that the Samaritans believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ. The name of

of Christ chiefly denotes, (1.) The doctrine of justification through his name or merits, 1 John iii. 12. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Jer. xxiii. 6. "This is the name, whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." i. e. He shall be acknowledged as the self-existent God, and as having wrought out that righteousness, through which alone any of mankind are justified. The confessing these truths is made a necessary mark of the true church. Jer. xxxiii. 16. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." From a conviction of this we are to pray in Christ's name, John xiv. 13. xv. 16. xvi. 23. i. e. to plead upon his obedience and sufferings for every needful blessing. Agreeably to the prophecy, Joel ii. 32. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered;" where calling on the name of the Lord means the same thing as making mention of his righteousness, even of his only, Psal. lxxi. 16. (2.) The name of Christ may intend also, the doctrine of the glory to which he is advanced as Mediator, in order to apply the purchased redemption. God the Father has given him a name above every name, Phil. ii. 10. In consequence of his obedience and sufferings, as a minister of the true sanctuary, he intercedes for us, as a Prophet teaches, and as a King rules us. Through this name we are saved, Acts iv. 12. i. e. by the power with which the Mediator is vested, the disorders are rectified, and the diseases cured, which sin had introduced into our natures. Through this name believers shall have life, John xx. 31. and in this name men shall be

be blessed, Psal. lxxii. 17. i. e. by the power of the Redeemer, grace shall be conferred upon them here, and glory hereafter: power being given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him of the Father.

§ 10. Many Scriptures, which assert the necessity of faith, would, if duly considered, acquaint us what is its nature and object.

It is said, John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." If we attentively view this verse, and the rest of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, it will appear, that we must believe on Christ, considered as God's only begotten Son, who, as such, was in heaven, even when he had come down from it; and yet as also the Son of man: as lifted up on a cross for the cure of our spiritual maladies: and as the gift of the Father's love to a wretched perishing world, the Father having constituted him Redeemer in the council of peace, 2 Tim. i. 9. Acts ii. 23. sent him into the world in the fulness of time, to assume man's nature, and obey and suffer for man, Isa. ix. 6. Jo. vi. 32. and having actually delivered him up to death as an atonement for our sins, Rom. viii. 32.

It is said, John iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The remainder of John's sermon shews, that we must believe on Jesus as the Bridegroom of the church; as one that comes from heaven and is above all; as one whom God hath sent, who speaketh the words of God, and to whom God giveth not the Spirit by measure; and as the Son of God,

whom the Father loves, and into whose hands he hath given all things.

John vi. 47. "He that believeth on me, hath  
"everlasting life;" i. e. as appears from the  
context, he that believeth on me as the bread of  
God, which came down from heaven, and giv-  
eth life unto the world; he that believeth me  
not only willing to save all that come to me, but  
so able that none such shall fail of complete sal-  
vation.

Acts xiii. 38. "By him all that believe are  
"justified." Here, as the connection shews,  
believing means a persuasion, that through the  
blood and merits of Christ, the chief of sinners  
may be pardoned and accepted.

Acts xxvi. 18. "Sanctified by faith that is in  
"me;" i. e. by a persuasion of the truth chiefly  
preached by the apostles, of which we have a  
comprehensive abstract, ver. 23. "That Christ  
"should suffer, and that he should be the first  
"that should rise from the dead, and should  
"shew light unto the people and to the Gen-  
"tiles."

Rom. iii. 21—26. faith is evidently repre-  
sented as a believing, that through Christ's blood  
and righteousness God may be just, in justifying  
men who have sinned, and come short of his  
glory. And that a persuasion of Christ's death, as  
an atonement for sin, is essential to saving faith,  
is strongly intimated, John i. 29. Gal. ii. 20.

§ 11. One thing further I would observe, that  
believing in Christ, necessarily supposes, a be-  
lieving that mankind by their rebellions against  
God, had merited the severest effects of his dis-  
pleasure; were unable to satisfy divine justice  
for their offences, or to cure their natural depr-  
avity;

vity; and were unworthy of the divine pity and help; so that their salvation is wholly to be ascribed, to the free mercy of God, and to the blood and obedience of Jesus. God's sending his Son to be the Saviour of the world, demonstrates, that the world was in a perishing condition, and without this amazing interposition must have actually perished. And this again demonstrates the infinite evil of sin, and the eternal and unalterable obligations men are under to love and serve God. To one insensible, that the law of God is holy, just, and good, and that his violations of that law deserve the most dreadful punishment, the tidings of a Saviour will appear an insult, not a favour. And the sufferings of that Saviour, in the room of sinners, will lead such a one, instead of admiring the tremendous justice and spotless purity of God, to suspect him of cruelty, whose tender mercies are over all his other works. Mr. Glass justly observes, *Testimony*, c. 5. § 3. That without a work of the law upon their consciences, men will slight the glad tidings of salvation.

§ 12. But I pretend not to collect a list of the truths, which it is evident from Scripture, saving faith either directly affests to, or necessarily supposes. It is for wise reasons, no such list is contained in the sacred oracles. It might have proved a fatal temptation to many, to rest content, with some general belief of these first principles of the oracles of God, instead of growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. For the same reason, the Bible tells us not, though many divines have attempted to tell us, how near we may approach the borders of wickedness without committing it, or how far we may be overcome by sin and satan, and

and yet retain a principle of grace. The silence of the Scripture, is a spur to diligence and advancement in religion, and a warning to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear.

### S E C T I O N III.

§ 1. **B**UT are there not names given to faith, in various passages of Scripture, that import choice, affection, and other operations of the will?—This has been taken for granted. How far upon sufficient grounds, I am now to enquire.

Faith is represented as hearing Christ, or the words or voice of Christ, Deut. xviii. 15. Psal. xviii. 45. Prov. i. 33. Isa. xlix. 1. lv. 3. John v. 24, 25. Without doubt every believer hears the voice of Christ calling him to the exercise of devout affections, and a correspondent practice. But that voice of the supreme Wisdom (*c*), the heavenly Bridegroom (*d*), the good Shepherd (*e*), which was to call nations hitherto ignorant of true religion (*f*), yea, to quicken the dead and call the things that are not, as tho' they were (*g*), is no other than the glad tidings that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. This is the joy and gladness which David prays he might be made to hear, Psal. li. 8. Faith hears, i. e. credits these declarations of God's mercy through Christ in the written word, and in the preached gospel. Clemens Alexandrinus

(*c*) Prov. i. 20. viii. 1, 4.      (*d*) Cant. ii. 8.  
 (*e*) John x. 3, 16.      (*f*) Isa. lv. 5.      (*g*) Rom. iv. 17.

justly observes, *Strom.* l. 5. c. 1. that faith is the ear of the soul, and that Homer uses hearing for perceiving. *Odyss.* ζ. ver. 186.

§ 2. Receiving Christ, where it is put for faith, is nothing else than receiving the gospel-testimony concerning Christ. In almost all languages, the metaphor of receiving, is often applied to hearing, learning, believing. Thus *Hesychius de viris doctrina claris*, p. 13. *ας ενοι ταπακεστατες εξεδεξαντο.* Virgil. *Aeneid.* II. 65. *Accipe nunc Danaum infidias.* *Sulpicius Severus*, Dial. I. pag. 428. “A beato viro Joanne verbum salutis accipit.” The same phraseology, is used both in the Old and New Testament, Prov. i. 3. ii. 1. iv. 10. Matth. xi. 14. Acts xvii. 11. 1 Cor. xi. 23. xv. 1, 3. Gal. i. 9. Philp. iv. 9. And faith is expressly described as a receiving God’s testimony concerning his Son, John iii. 32, 33. 1 John v. 9. As a gladly receiving Peter’s words, Acts ii. 41. And as receiving the word of God, Acts xi. 1.

Receiving Christ therefore, John i. 11, 12. is a receiving him as the light of the world, ver. 4—9. which he was chiefly by his death and sufferings, as by these he witnessed to and manifested the truth, in a manner peculiar to himself, as the Son of God and Saviour of men.

John v. 43. “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not.” The meaning is, ye do not believe and acknowledge my divine commission to save sinners. For our Lord proceeds to shew, ver. 44—47. why they believed not his words, which would not have been to his purpose, if believing his words and receiving him had not meant one and the same thing.

Our Lord himself puts it beyond question, that receiving him, means receiving or believing the doctrine of the apostles, John xiii. 20. Matth. x. 40. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me, " and he that receiveth me, receiyeth him that " sent me," i. e. He that acknowledgeth you as my embassadors, i Cor. iv. 1. and regards your message as the word of the living God, 1 Thess. ii. 13. receiveth me, and the Father that sent me. Hence unbelievers are represented as putting from them the word of God, Acts xiii. 46. And rejecting Christ is explained, John xiii. 48. as a not receiving his words. Consequently to accept Christ, is to receive these words.

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I acknowledge the generality of Calvinists, have considered the consent of the will as included in receiving Christ. Nor will I peremptorily deny, that in some Scriptures receiving Christ may signify, the heart chusing, and the affections embracing and cleaving to Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King; and the whole soul consenting to, approving of, and delighting in the Saviour, and in the gospel scheme of salvation through him. But then, in these Scriptures, it denotes something different from faith, though I readily allow intimately connected with, inseparably attending, or necessarily flowing from faith, and therefore essential to the Christian character. Every believer is acquainted with these actings of soul. They are not faith. Yet that is no reason for treating them ludicrously. There may be ground for the censure passed by the learned Mr. Riccaltown, *Saber Enquiry*, c. 5. "Some seem to speak, as if Christ was like a material gift, which cannot be given, unless it change Masters,

" Masters, nor received without a formal taking  
 " it into one's custody and possession, as part of  
 " his goods and utensils; an absurdity so obvi-  
 " ous, that one would think to mention it were  
 " to confute it." Yet I am persuaded, that ve-  
 nerable divine will agree with me, that the im-  
 proper stile in which a good thing has been some-  
 times represented, and the wrong name that has  
 been given it, will not vindicate those, whether  
 Calvinists or Arminians, who have lately dressed  
 it in a fool's coat. Even wise and good men, by  
 immoderate care to guard against one extreme,  
 are often apt to fall into another no less pernicious.

§ 3. There is still less difficulty in explaining  
 these Scriptures, in which faith seems to be re-  
 presented by eating or drinking, and particularly  
 by eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood.

Any thing that either improves or comforts the  
 mind, is termed its food. Cicero says of *Deme-  
 trius Phalereus*, l. 5. de fin. " Animi cultus erat  
 " ei quasi cibua." Wickedness is represented as  
 the food of the ungodly, Job. xx. 14. And the  
 graces of saints and the conversion of the wicked  
 is represented as our Saviour's food, Cant. iv. 16.  
 v. 1. Rev. iii. 20. John iv. 32, 34. because he  
 rejoices in these. That which is not bread, Isa.  
 lv. 2. is that which can afford the soul no real  
 improvement, no solid and substantial pleasure.

But with peculiar propriety, truth is repre-  
 sented as meat and drink to the soul, and know-  
 ing, believing, and considering the truth, as eat-  
 ing and drinking. Thus *Petronius Arbiter Satyrus*.  
 c. 5.

" Mæoniumque bibat felici pectore sōtem,  
 " Mox a Socratis plenus."

And it was common among the Jews, instead of saying, Master, we come to be thy scholars, to say, Master, we come to drink waters from thy well (b). Hence, waters are often a symbol of the gospel revelation, e. g. Psal. xlvi. 4. Isa. xliv. 3. Zech. xiv. 8. Joel iii. 18. Ezek. xlvii. 1. and eating and drinking often denote, faith joyfully assenting to and contemplating the word of grace. See Prov. ix. 5. Cant. v. 1. Isa. lv. 1. lxv. 13. Jer. xv. 16. John vi. 50. vii. 37. Rev. xxii. 17. The glad tidings of salvation published to all nations are the accomplishment of that promise, Isa. xxv. 6. " And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." When these glad tidings are understood and believed, the meek do eat and are satisfied, Psal. xxii. 27. they taste and see that the Lord is good, Psal. xxxiv. 9. Christ's fruit is sweet to their taste, Cant. ii. 3. yea, with joy they draw water out of these wells of salvation, Isa. xiii. 3. and this affords an easy interpretation of what our Lord says, John vi. 54, 55. " Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." It is the doctrine of Christ crucified, not the material flesh and blood of Christ, which is here asserted to be the food of the soul. Hence, our Lord adds, ver. 63. " It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth

(b) See Schottgenii horæ Hebraicæ in John iv. 14. and Universal History, 8vo. edit. vol. III. 227.

" nothing :

"nothing: the words that I speak unto you, "they are spirit, and they are life." The scope of that discourse, as is intimated, ver. 29. was to recommend faith; and through the whole of it believing and eating are synonymous expressions, and have the same things ascribed to them. Thus what is asserted of believing, ver. 40. is asserted in almost the same words of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood, ver. 54.

In consequence of this spiritual eating and drinking, Christ the bread of life, i. e. the doctrine of the person, offices and sufferings of Christ, abides John vi. 56; xv. 4. 7. lives Gal. ii. 20. dwells Eph. iii. 17. (i) in believers; and is in them

(i) If this interpretation of Christ's abiding, living, and dwelling in the soul, appears ill grounded to any, let them attend to what follows. Christ abiding in us, and his words abiding in us, are used as synonymous expressions. John xv. 5, 7. Parallel to these are the expressions 1 John ii. 24, 27. of that abiding in Christians which they had heard from the beginning; and of that anointing which teacheth them all things abiding in them. The essential presence of Christ as God is every where. And as man, the heavens must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things. But he is present with his people in a gracious manner, by the words of his gospel, accompanied by the influence of his spirit. These are the seed of the new birth, by which Christ is formed in men. 1 Pet. i. 23. 1 John iii. 9. And where these are habitually considered and believed, they are also the grand means of advancing real Christians in conformity to God's image. 2 Tim. iii. 17. Hence we are often reminded, how important it is to continue in Christ's words, John viii. 31. to abide in the doctrine of Christ, 2 John 9. and to continue in the things we have learned. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Christ crucified is not only *the way*, the alone medium of access to God, and acceptance with him, *the truth* firmly believed by every Christian, but *the life*, the doctrine which imparts spiritual strength and vigour to the soul.

them the hope of glory, Col. ii. 27. and strength of their life. Ps. xxvii. 1. Nay, divine truth thus received, becomes in the soul a well of living water, springing up into eternal life, John iv. 14. or as it is expressed, John viii. 38. rivers of living water. So that believers, especially public teachers, are as so many fountains or rivers, to convey to others these fatiguing streams; Ps. lxxxvii. 7. Prov. x. 11; xviii. 4; Is. xxxv. 7; 2 Pet. ii. 17. Rev. viii. 10. Only observe, that it is not they that drink; their example, eloquence, or christian experience, but *the water that is in them*, that is, the truths of the gospel, first believed by themselves, and then imparted to their hearers, which become to these hearers, spiritual drink, or the means of nourishing them up in faith, holiness and comfort.

To right

§ 4. Coming to Christ, of which we read Is. xlvi. 24; lv. 1. 3. John vi. 35, 37, 44, 45; vii. 37; xiv. 6; v. 40. is the immediate fruit of faith, rather than faith itself. It is the seeking all spiritual and heavenly blessings only in the way of union and communion with Christ, from

a

John xii. 49, 50. "The Father which sent me gave me a commandment, and I know that his commandment is life everlasting." The doctrine of Christ not only brings to light life and immortality, and the way that leads to them, but is the means in the hand of the spirit to begin, preserve and strengthen that spiritual life, which shall at last be completed in a life of glory. With the utmost justice therefore, did Peter say to our Lord, John vi. 68. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." And Christ himself addressing the Father, John xvii. 3. says; "This is life eternal to know thee the only true God; and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Job speaks, xix. 28. of the root of the word being found in him, and John x. epi. iii. 9. describes Christians as having God's seed, i. e. word remaining in them.

a persuasion, that in this way and no other they may be obtained: It is not improbable, that the expression alludes to the Israelites coming to the tabernacle or temple, where the Son of God in a typical manner manifested his glory. See Ps. xcvi. 2; c. 2. Is. xxvii. 13.

In like manner drawing near to God, coming to the thrones of grace, or coming to God thro' Christ, are not descriptions of faith, but of the believer's application to God thro' the Redeemer for every blessing. Otherwise the exhortations to come to the thrones of grace *boldly*, i. e. with the confidence of faith, Heb. iv. 16. and to draw near in full assurance of faith, Heb. x. 22. would be superfluous.

To this it has been ingeniously objected, "Our Lord said; ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. If a bare belief that he was the Messiah entitled to eternal life, then one who believes this has a title to eternal life before he came to him, and if so, he has no need to come to him that he might have life. Our Saviour directed his disciples to ask all things of the Father in his name. He also taught them every day to pray forgive us our debts. Query, How can we go to God in the name of Christ for the pardon of daily transgressions, if in this way pardon is not to be obtained. If pardon is had by a bare belief of the bare truth, we are not in the belief of the truth to ask for pardon in the name of Christ, because we are pardoned already." (j).

(j) Bellamy's Glory of the Gospel, p. 75.

If it is indeed absurd, to pray or use means, for that, of which we have a promise, or to which we are already entitled, the above reasoning is unanswerable. But this, the objector has too much acquaintance with the Bible to assert. God had promised to David, 2 Sam. vii. 16. that his house and kingdom should be established for ever. And yet no sooner did Nathan intimate to David that promise, than we find him praying, as ver. 25. "And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou has said." Paul was assured by an angel of God, that there should be no loss of any man's life that sailed in the ship with him. Acts xxvii. 21—25. And yet when the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, Paul tells the Centurion, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved, ver. 30, 31. The application of these remarks is obvious: Ungodly sinners, upon believing in Jesus, are entitled thro' his righteousness, to the pardon of sin, to the influences of the spirit, and to eternal glory; nay, the final possession of these blessings is ensured to them by the promise of God. Yet this does not hinder, their being put in actual possession of them gradually, and in the use of the prayer of faith, and other means.

#### S E C T I O N IV.

§ 1. **B**UT does the faith of God's elect differ from that of others, only in the thing assented to?—By no means. The nature and foundation of the assent in him who has saving faith,

faith, is specifically different from the nature and foundation of the assent in self-deceivers.

Self-deceivers may have orthodox sentiments of religion. They may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and yet want charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. And what they thus understand, they may also believe, being convinced by miracles and other external evidences, that these mysteries are indeed a divine revelation. Many believed in Christ's name, when they saw the miracles which he did, to whom Jesus would not commit himself, because he knew all men. John ii. 23, 24.

Shall we then say, that saving faith is not founded upon evidence, and that it assents to truth it knows not why?—That would contradict the apostle's assertion, Heb. xi. 1. that faith is the evidence *ελεγχος* of things not seen, i. e. furnishes the mind with convincing evidence of objects invisible to the bodily eye: and Christ's promise, that the spirit shall convince (*ελεγξει*) the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. John xvi. 8. The word signifies to convince by way of demonstration, or so to manifest the evidence of a truth, that it shall appear unreasonable to entertain the least doubt of it. *Ελεγχος* *δε εστιν*, says Aristotle, Rhet. ad Alex. c. 34. ὁ μερινὸς δινατός αλλως εχειν, αλλ' επεις ου πρᾶς λεγομεν. The spirit takes from the scripture, the grand evidence of faith which he had lodged there, and carries it to the hearts of the elect, and then the light and power of divine truth so apprehends and overcomes the soul, that it can no longer resist.

§ 2. *That triumphant evidence*, is no other than the glory and excellency of the gospel scheme of *revelation*, manifested by the holy spirit in such a manner, as produces full conviction, that

a scheme so glorious could have none but God for its author (&). If the gospel be hid; and

(&) That there is an excellency in the gospel, which when perceived, produces a saving conviction of its divine original, has been largely proved by President Edwards, in his valuable treatise on religious affections: tho' that great man from his sermons on justification, seems to have placed saving faith in the choice of the will. This is not the only instance in which writers of such distinguished abilities in proving one thing, lay the foundation for proving another, not only foreign to their thoughts, but opposite to their sentiments. Professor Lampe of Utrecht, in his dissertation on the formal act of faith, places it in the consent or acquiescence of the will in the gospel scheme of salvation. And yet in his commentary on the gospel of John, and other critical writings, has evidently shewn, that the descriptions of faith which are generally thought to imply choice and affection, are used to denote knowledge or assent.

Mr. Glass, in his testimony of the King of Martyrs, Eds. 1729. &c. 4. Sect. 2. p. 192, 193, 197, 198, 199. has some very judicious remarks on the foundation of the assent in saving faith. The substance of them is. There is an extrinsic evidence for Christianity from miracles, &c. which may stop the mouths of gain-sayers, make men attentive to the gospel, and render those inexcusable that openly reject it. This may be, and is clearly perceived by men, that are no ways influenced by the gospel in their practice, having never discerned the glory, or felt the power of divine truth: for many such have as clear wits, and as much thirst for philosophical knowledge as other men. But the faith whereby men are saved, is not begotten by, and does not stand upon this extrinsic evidence, but on the light and evidence which shines in the divine testimony itself, and which when beheld, in so far as it is so, will effectually change men, and conform them to itself in heart and life. None can say, it is impossible that God should reveal his mind and will, and give abundant evidence that it is he that speaks in the revelation itself. Nor that it is impossible, that by means of this revelation, he should form the minds of those, whom he would have to understand it, into a suitableness to this his truth, and make them capable to discern this evidence, in having a true understanding of the truth, which he testifies, and which carries this evidence in itself.

men perish thro' unbelief; it is hid from those, whose minds the God of this world hath blinded; least the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. 2 Cor. iv. 4. Where the gospel is discerned in its native lustre and glory, unbelief cannot remain, and souls cannot perish. God begins a saving change on the heart, by shining into it, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ: Ib. ver. 6. It is in consequence of Christ's manifesting the father's name, i. e. his glory, to the men given him out of the world, that they know surely he came out from the Father, and was sent by him. John xvii. 6—8. The grand facts of the gospel were recorded by Luke, that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things wherein he had been instructed: Luke i. 4: and by John, that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. John xx. 31. Remarkable are Solomon's words, Prov. xxii. 19—21. "That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even unto thee. Have not I written unto thee excellent things in council? and in knowledge? that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee." Here it is plainly asserted, that the excellency of council and of knowledge, which appears in the written word, was stamped upon it for this very end, that from viewing that excellency, men might know the certainty of the words of truth, and be encouraged to trust in the LORD. And that the glory and excellency of divine truth, should actually produce this effect, we learn from Ps. cxxxviii.

4, 5. "All the kings of the earth shall praise  
 "thee O LORD, when they hear the words of  
 "thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways  
 "of the LORD: for great is the glory of the  
 "LORD." The whole paths of Jehovah for  
 man's salvation, shall appear so glorious and  
 worthy of God, that the word which reveals  
 these paths shall be entertained as faithful and  
 worthy of all acceptance, and shall fill the heart  
 with joy, and the mouth with praise. The spi-  
 rit of wisdom and revelation, by ~~this~~ marvelous  
 light, discovers such unparalleled beauty and ex-  
 cellency, such divine glory, in the person, offi-  
 ces and benefits of Christ, as commands con-  
 viction, captivates the affections, and transports  
 the soul with wonder and joy, so that men are  
 pleasantly constrained to believe on an unseen  
 Saviour, to love him, and to rejoice in him with  
 joy unspeakable and full of glory. But my  
 present work is to consider the foundation of the  
 Christian's faith, not that of his love and joy.

This subject has been well illustrated by Dr.  
 Owen, on the divine original and authority of  
 the scripture, Oxf. 1659. and in his treatise en-  
 titled, the reason of Faith, Lond. 1677. I shall  
 transcribe a few hints from the last. "The  
 "reading the law before all Israel, was the grand  
 "means by which their children in all gene-  
 "rations, might hear and learn to fear the Lord  
 "their God, Deut. xxxi. 11—13. It is sup-  
 "posed, Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. that there is a light  
 "and efficacy in scripture, which sufficiently  
 "manifests its divine original. Nay our Lord,  
 "Luke xvi. 27—31. evidently supposes, that  
 "he who is not persuaded by this light and  
 "efficacy, would not be persuaded by witnes-  
     " sing

" sing the greatest external miracle, even one  
" rising from the dead. The word of prophecy  
" is represented more sure than even a voice  
" from heaven. 2 Pet. i. 19. The making  
" known the mystery of salvation, is described  
" as the grand means of bringing men to the  
" obedience of faith. Rom. xvi. 26. The Old  
" Testament church was condemned for reject-  
" ing the antient prophets, many of whom  
" wrought no miracles. Consequently there  
" was an intrinsic evidence in their doctrine,  
" which rendered the rejecting it inexcusable.  
" The light not only discovers other things, but  
" manifests itself: and the characters of divine  
" wisdom, holiness, grace, authority, &c. in  
" scripture, are as legible to the faith of the  
" meanest, as of the most learned believers."

Perhaps these hints may go far to solve a phænomenon, which has considerably puzzled many curious observers of the present state of religion in Great-Britain. Never did any age of the church produce such a multitude of elaborate and unanswerable apologies for Christianity, especially in England, and yet never did infidelity more abound. Does it not deserve enquiry, how far this may be owing to an unhappy neglect of inculcating and explaining these peculiar doctrines of Christianity, which when seen in their native beauty, are the grand means of producing and increasing saving faith?

§ 3. It is no objection against what I have said, that many discern no such glory in the gospel, as indicates its divine original. Truths wholly unknown to some, may be as intuitively evident to others, as general maxims are to all. A connoisseur can discern beauties in a fine picture

ture or statue, which wholly escape the vulgar eye.. White and black, sweet and bitter are different, and the difference is extremely perceptible, tho' the blind and tasteless perceive it not. Minds enlightened by the spirit, can clearly discern the rays of divinity in the sacred oracles: If others are incapacitated by mental blindness from thus discerning them, that does not diminish their native brightness. The word of God's grace falls with such power and evidence on the soul of the enlightened sinner, that he can no more withhold his assent, than one who has his eyes open and sound, can hinder himself from seeing light at noon day, or than a philosopher can restrain his assent from a mathematical theorem, when his understanding is overpowered by demonstration. As even in these lower cases, the soul is merely passive, it must be much more so here, when a divine power conveys with convincing light, and whenever it comes, perfectly subdues.

Permit me to transcribe a few sentiments from Mr. Barton's analogy of divine wisdom, p. 58, 59. " We find in all human works of the same hand, a certain similitude, whereby a critical observer may, in most cases, determine the author, without any other information. The lines and colourings of a picture shall have such peculiar characteristics, as to perpetuate the name and credit of the artist, without any written eulogy: and pieces seen in different countries shall very justly be attributed to the same author. The proportions of a building shall tell who is the architect, with more truth and precision than a name graven in stone. A stile in writing shall be as distinguishable a mark

" marks to ascertain the works of the ingeni-  
" ous; as the characters in which they record  
" their works, or their bodily features, which  
" distinguished them living. This observation  
" extends also to moral conduct: mankind not-  
"withstanding the great variety of modes of  
" action, being constant as to national princi-  
" ples, considered as collective bodies; and also  
" each man to his own principles, considered  
" as individuals. Hence arises that opinion  
" which one man forms of another from a mode  
" of action, which shall enable him to judge  
" with great probability, whether any particu-  
" lar action be justly attributed to any particu-  
" lar person."

The application of these remarks is obvious. Is there a character in the works of men, which indicates their author: and shall we suppose, that in the works of God, the characters of divinity are less evident? Do we not find such characters in the works of creation? The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy work. The invisible things of God, even his external power and Godhead, are clearly to be seen from the things that he hath made. In the universal frame of nature, may be seen, the greatness, the wisdom and the goodness of the author of nature. If the works of creation, by being what they are, discover whose they are, why should it be thought a thing incredible, that the word of God, that word which we are told Ps. cxxxviii. 2. God hath ~~manifested~~<sup>magnified</sup> above all his name, should manifest itself to be God's word, by its own intrinsic light, and beauty, and majesty? Is it improbable, that men should know the Bible, to be God's word, in a way

way analogous to that, in which they know the world to be his work? Can we distinguish the face, the voice, the writings of one man from those of another? Does a lamb know the voice of its dam? Can sheep distinguish the voice of their shepherd, from that of a stranger? And why may there not be such an impress of God on his word, as that all whom the God of this world hath not blinded, can distinguish it by that impress from any human composition? Even, as when the sun is arisen, there is no need of witnesses to prove to a seeing man, that it is day.

§ 4. Saving faith may therefore be defined a persuasion that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, flowing from spiritual views of such a glory in the gospel, as satisfies and convinces the mind, that a scheme so glorious could have none but God for its author. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John v. 10. The word of grace is to him instead of a thousand witnesses of its own truth. Such are not "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," Eph. iv. 14. "But settled and grounded in the faith," Col. i. 23. and assured of the things they have learned, knowing of what divine teacher they have learned them. Such can say to the Redeemer, "We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 68, 69. Encouraged by this, they draw nigh to God with true hearts in the full assurance of faith, Heb. x. 21. come boldly to a throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16. And ask in faith without wavering, James i. 6. not questioning the power, the grace, and faithfulness of God tho' a redeemer, tho' they may greatly doubt their

their own interest in God. An assent to the gospel founded upon such discoveries of its glory, is impossible without the special saving operations of the spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is 'the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' 2 Cor. xiii.

3. The man who has no other and higher principle of discerning objects, than that which he brought into the world with him, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14.

§ 5. I have said nothing of another ground of certainty, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, peculiar to true believers: I mean, their experiencing that he is the Christ, by his enlightening their understandings as a prophet, speaking peace to their consciences as a priest, and renewing their wills as a king. They cannot doubt that he is the God of Israel who hath done for them these wondrous works. Ps. lxxii.

18. God's Son is revealed in them, Gal. i. 16. and by his operations on their hearts, shews himself the Son of God. Hence God promises, Hos. i. 20. "I will betroth thee unto me in "faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." There is evidently a knowledge of God, and faith in him, which precedes in order of nature man's being betrothed unto God. But then there is another knowledge of God, posterior to our spiritual espousals, even a knowledge that God is faithful to his promises, by feeling these promises accomplished to us in particular. But this evidence of God's faithfulness, cannot be the primary foundation of faith, because believing goes before it. It is after we have believed,  
that

that we are sealed with the holy spirit of promise, Ephes. i. 13. And indeed, this is rather a certainty from our own feelings, than a crediting the divine testimony, that Jesus is the Christ: an assurance of sense, not of faith: and an assurance not only of the truth of the gospel; but of a fact no where revealed there, our own particular interest in God's favour, and in the operations of his sanctifying spirit.

#### S E C T I O N V.

¶ n. **B**UT as true faith is distinguished from counterfeits by its foundation: so that difference appears by its inseparable attendants and genuine fruits.

The inclinations and behaviour of the men of the world, is considerably affected, by objects distant and future; and that consequently cannot be discerned by the eye or other bodily senses. The future revolutions of states are unseen. So are the honours to which the ambitious aspire; the pleasures for which the voluptuous pant, and the riches which the worldly minded covet. If these possibilities have such effects on mankind; does not reason force us to conclude, that the glorious objects of faith, when viewed in their reality and importance, must greatly influence their affections and conduct?

Truth is the food of the soul. The truths of divine revelation are the means of producing, nourishing, and increasing the spiritual life. God works on men in a way suited to their rational natures, and to the established connection between the understanding and will. He begins with

with enlightening the understanding; that the light and force of truth, may sweetly attract the will to a right choice.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus in God's light the believer sees light, thinks and judges of things in some measure as God does; so that God's mind and will revealed in the Scripture, become also his. Where this heavenly Lamp points out the way, he cheerfully follows. If he did not resolve, agreeably to the strong and lively impressions he feels of divine truths, he would do himself violence. That light, like the light of the natural sun, while it discovers objects, at the same time by a powerful influence quickens, warms, refreshes, and supports. "The light is the life of men," John i. 5. Christ's words are spirit and life, John vii. 63. On this account the knowledge or remembrance of divine things, is frequently put in Scripture for the whole of our duty, e. g. Eccles. xii. 1. Exod. x. 8. because divine things, when rightly known and called to mind, in some measure affect and influence, as their various natures require. On the other hand, bad men are said not to know God's ways, Psal. xcvi. 40. and though the sins of the Israelites were many, yet often all of them were comprehended in unbelief, Jude 9. Psal. lxxviii. 22. Heb. iv. 2, 3. Not to be affected with qualities in an object, that are in their own nature affecting, is not to perceive these qualities. It is however the doctrines of divine revelation, rather than the precepts, that are the chief means of sanctification. Love to God, for in-

(1) See Owen on Communion with God, Lond. 1700. P. 15.—17.

stance, is not so much excited by the precept, *Thou shall love the Lord thy God*, as by discoveries of God's loveliness and love (m).

The fundamental articles of Christianity, relating to the astonishing plan of man's redemption, are admirably calculated to promote holiness of heart and life, and indeed are the grand spring of both. Hence, with the strictest propriety, the gospel is termed the truth according to godliness, Tit. i. 1. and the mystery of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 16. And doing Christ's commandments, is represented as the necessary evidence, that we know him, and that the truth is in us, 1 John ii. 3, 4. So that when men are said to be sanctified through the truth, John xvii. 19. or to be created in righteousness and holiness of truth, Ephes. iv. 24. the same thing is meant, as when they are said to be sanctified through faith in Jesus Christ, Acts xxvi. 18. and to have their hearts purified by faith, Acts xv. 9. "The corruption of mankind, even "where the purest religion is professed, and in "theory assented to, does not arise from the "weakness of religious principle, but from the "want of it (n)."

§ 2. A belief that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, implies a belief that the world needed such a salvation, and consequently a belief of the infinite evil of sin, and the infinite obligations to duty. And this last supposes a knowledge and belief of the infinite glory and perfection of God, whence that obli-

(m) See Principal Leechman's sermon at the opening of the General Assembly.

(n) Dr. Brown on the Characteristics Essay 2. Sect. 10.

gation primarily arises. Now such a knowledge of God, cannot but influence our dispositions and actions. Even the faith of devils affects them. "The devils believe and tremble." And had men such an apprehension of God's revealed character, as devils have of his severity, it would draw forth love, reverence, and thankfulness, and animate to a cheerful discharge of every duty. If we know one to have an amiable temper, we naturally desire his friendship, and carefully avoid whatever may forfeit it. If we believe another wise, honest, active, and benevolent, we readily entrust to his care, even these affairs, about the success of which we are most solicitous. And, without scruple, we refer a just cause to the decision of a skilful and impartial judge. The application of these remarks is easy. He only knows God as just, who fears his vengeance, and is careful not to provoke it: as long-suffering, who is not hasty in his spirit to be angry: as merciful, who readily forgives the offences of his fellow-servants: as the ruler of all persons and events, who is anxiously careful for nothing, and holds on in the paths of duty, leaving events to the divine disposal. "None wander from God, "prefer the flesh and the world before him, and "in their whole lives walk contrary to him, but "from their ignorance of him (o)." These who do not "execute judgment and seek the truth, "though they say the **LORD** liveth, surely they "swear falsely," Jer. v. 1, 2. What they swear is in itself an undoubted truth, but their professed belief of it is false and hypocritical. They are,

(o) Swinnoch's Incomparableness of God, p. 2.

as it follows, ver. 21. " a foolish people, and  
 " without understanding, which have eyes and  
 " see not, which have ears and hear not," If  
 they understood and believed the truth they pro-  
 fess, they could not go on thus frowardly in the  
 ways of their own heart. If they realized the  
 glory of God, the infinite value of his favour,  
 that nothing can be against men if he be for  
 them, and nothing for them if he be against  
 them ; they must have concluded, that at all  
 times, in all places, and in every possible cir-  
 cumstance, it is wrong and unfit to deviate from  
 duty. " Were we thoroughly convinced of the  
 " amiableness of the divine character, we could  
 " not surely avoid imitating it, where such imi-  
 " tation is within our power. But the incon-  
 " sistency and absurdity of our conduct consists,  
 " rather in acting contrary to our own concep-  
 " tions and declarations, than to any fixed abid-  
 " ing sentiments of our minds. And we have  
 " not after all such a real sense of the amiableness  
 " of the divine perfections, as by our readiness  
 " to take it for an undoubted truth, and to pro-  
 " fess it to others, we seem to have (p.)."

§ 3. None rightly believe that Christ is a Sa-  
 viour, who have not suitable conceptions from  
 what he saves. And none can have such concep-  
 tions, without perceiving the goodness and ex-  
 cellency of the gospel salvation. Damnation and  
 salvation are discerned by the believer to be what  
 they really are. The first, is therefore appre-  
 hended by him, as more terrible than the most  
 cruel tortures man can devise : and the last, as

(p.) Bulkley's Sermons, Lond. 1752. p. 132.

infinitely

infinitely better than any contrary good, which the devil or the world can present to pervert his choice. Compared with these, the gain of sin, and loss of obedience, appear to him less than nothing, and lighter than vanity.

Saving faith always produces a personal application of these truths. When an awakened sinner rightly understands and believes the threatenings of God's law, he must believe, that he himself, in particular, is under the curse. And if we understand and believe the gospel, we must of consequence believe, I say not that our sins are forgiven, but that however great our guilt and depravity has been, or still is, Christ is perfectly able to save us. God attests, not only that the gospel salvation is a reality, and good in itself, but that it is good for us in our present circumstances, and calls and invites us to attend to it as such. Hence it is written, Prov. xxii. 19. "That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee, &c." And Job v. 27. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is: hear it, and know thou it for thy good." Accordingly, the spirit when he works faith, impresses on the heart a sense of our own interest in what we believe, and disposes us to be suitably affected: so that the soul, though it was passive in receiving that light which produced faith, does not remain so. Right views of the gospel salvation, necessarily engage to improve it, in the manner, and for the ends, for which it was revealed. Seeing that in it, which answers his necessities, the sinner must needs desire it, choose it, and rest and rely upon it. What he firmly believes good for himself in particular, yea, better for him than any thing else,

else, must operate on his will and affections, in proportion to its apprehended goodness, and excite him to follow after it, though at the expence of other things that appear of inferior value. It is no objection to this, that many are abandoned profligates, who yet have some impressions of the happiness of good men, and faintly wish to possess it. For, though a lot among the saints, viewed in a certain point of light, appears to them desirable; they reject it, when considered as connected with self-denial, mortification, and a life of holiness, fondly flattering themselves with superior pleasure in gratifying their unruly appetites. One, who would gladly purchase a commodity, may notwithstanding scruple the price demanded, through rating it lower than its worth. When temptation prevails, some enticing sensual good, or some alarming evil, appears, at the instant of choice, more worthy immediate regard, than the gospel salvation. And thus it could not appear, if the gospel salvation was at that instant believed to be, what it really is. With good reason therefore, the Scripture often represents faith, as the grand preservative against sinning, whether from dread of suffering, or prospect of gain. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 18. "For which cause we  
" faint not, but though our outward man perish,  
" yet the inward man is renewed day by day.  
" While we look not at the things which are  
" seen, but at the things which are not seen; for  
" the things which are seen are temporal, but  
" the things which are not seen are eternal." Heb. x. 36, 37, 38. "For ye have need of pa-  
" tience, that after ye have done the will of  
" God, ye might receive the promise. For yet  
" a little while, and he that shall come, will  
" come,

" come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith." See also Heb. xith chap. To know any thing to be greatly desireable, and yet not to desire it; or to be extremely dreadful, and yet not to dread it, and to do our utmost to avoid it, is contrary to human nature.

This necessary connection of faith and obedience, is by no means consistent with the Arminian system. Yet some of the ablest Arminian divines, constrained by the force of truth, have gone far in acknowledging it. I shall only refer to two.

" To say that evidence proposed, apprehended and considered, is not sufficient to make the understanding to approve, or that the greatest good proposed, and the greatest evil threatened, when believed and reflected on, is not suited to engage the will to chuse the good, and refuse the evil, is in effect to say, that which alone does move the will to chuse and to refuse, is not sufficient to engage it so to do; that which alone is requisite to make me understand and approve, is not sufficient to do so; which, being contradictory to itself, must of necessity be false." *Whitby's five Arminian Points*, 2d edit. p. 211.

" What we really believe to be our chiefest good, will still be chosen. And what we apprehend to be the worst of evils, will, while we continue under that conviction, be refused by us," *ib.* p. 212.

" Could we, with the eyes of faith, look up to the throne of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and discern the innumerable company of angels, &c. a man would no more part with his

" inheritance above, for the short enjoyments of  
" sin, than he would sell the reversion of an earthly  
" crown, for one morsel of meat." *Bishop Sherg-  
lock's Sermons*, vol. I. Discourse 14. p. 373. of  
the first edition.

§ 4. I acknowledge my argument would be incomplete, if deliverance from the dominion of sin, conformity to the image of God, and devotedness to his service, were not essential branches of salvation. A ~~person~~ <sup>died it became impossible</sup> may restrain from gross immoralities: ~~but~~ love must be produced by the perception of what is amiable. Men can neither be bribed, nor frightened into love. But, in truth, Jesus died not only to deliver from the wrath to come, but to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Now, can salvation, in this view, be perceived to be what it really is, transcendently lovely, and desirable: while the person, who thus perceives it, commits all manner of wickedness with greediness, or, at least, instead of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, allows himself in the habitual presumptuous neglect of certain difficult or unfashionable duties? If slavery and bondage appear irksome and unsupportable; will one contentedly continue under them, and when he may, refuse to be made free? Can one, who counts sin the worst of evils; instead of hating it, delight in it, hold it fast, and refuse to let it go? He who only takes it upon trust, that honey is sweet, may soon be baffled out of it. But if one has tasted that sweetneſs, all the eloquence of a Tully, would not persuade him that it was bitter. Even so, he who knows the transcendant excellency

lency of holiness, will love it, and choose it, and cleave to it with full purpose of heart. A passage is opened to his heart by that knowledge. And with warmth and earnestness he embraces the promises of sanctifying grace, and in a humble reliance upon them, studies to cleanse himself from all remaining filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

“ There is a truth in it, that all sin arises from  
“ some kind of ignorance, or, at least, from  
“ present inadvertance and inconsideration, turn-  
“ ing away the mind from the light, which  
“ therefore for the time is as if it were not, and  
“ is all one with ignorance in the effect; and  
“ therefore the works of sin are called works of  
“ darkness. For were the true visage of sin seen  
“ at a full light, undressed and unpainted, it  
“ were impossible, while it so appeared, that  
“ any one soul would be in love with it, but  
“ would rather fly it, as hideous and abomin-  
“ able. But because the soul unrenewed is all  
“ darkness, therefore it is all lust and love of  
“ sin; no order in it, because no light.” *Leigh-  
ton's Expository Works*, vol. I. p. 133.

§ 5. But, it is the view of the manner in which salvation was purchased, or, in other words, the view of what Jesus has done and suffered for mankind sinners, that is the grand means of sanctification. Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, John vi. 25. The life, which Christians now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them, Gal. i. 20. By Christ and his cross, the world is crucified to them, and they to the world, Gal. vi. 14. For “ who is  
“ he that overcometh the world, but he that be-

" believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, 1 John v. 5. The truth, that he who is Son of God and Son of man was lifted up on a cross for man's **redemption**, is the truth, the knowledge of which sets free the slaves of sin from that base and wretched bondage, John viii. 32. and seq. compared with 28, 29.

Every principle of action, in the human breast, must be affected by this amazing truth.—Are men prompted to obedience, by a sense of the fitness of subjection to God, of the beauties of holiness, of the rectitude of the divine law, and of the hatefulness and injustice of transgression? He who believes in Christ crucified, must feel the force of that motive. For unless he saw, that mankind were under the highest possible obligations to obedience, and that violating these obligations is the highest possible evil, the bitter sufferings of the Son of God, would appear to him unnecessary for man's redemption, and the insisting on them for that end, unsuitable to the wisdom and goodness, nay, even to the justice of God.—Does gratitude enlarge the heart to run in the ways of God's commandments? Surely, the unspeakable gift of the Son of God, tends, above every thing else, to excite that gratitude. The love of Christ constrains thus to judge, that since one died for all, all were dead, and that we who live, are henceforth bound, not to live to ourselves, but to him that died and rose again, 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. All the evils that men or devils can threaten; all the pomp and pleasure, and wealth, that the world can promise; seem contemptible, disappear, nay, are utterly annihilated, by a view of our obligations to redeeming love. This will beget strength of resolution, and firmness and fortitude.

fortitude, in actually doing or suffering for the cause of Christ.—Again, Does example recommend virtue? Never was obedience so recommended, as by the Lawgiver obeying the law; and perfectly fulfilling all righteousness. It is by beholding in the glass of the gospel, the glories of the Lord, that we are changed into his image from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. He only rightly believes the incarnation of the Son of God, and all his consequent acts of obedience and suffering, who by contemplating these, has that mind formed in him, which was also in Jesus, and is taught in some measure to walk as Christ also walked.—Or, is it by the fear of God, that men depart from evil? Surely, our being redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, is the strongest caveat, thus to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. One infinitely dear to God, and who had never offended him, must become a curse, to pave the way for delivering from the curse of the law, the guilty degenerate race of apostate Adam. The sword of God's justice awakes against the man that was his fellow: and thus manifests in the most striking tremendous manner, God's infinite displeasure against sin, and the dreadful danger of transgressing his holy law. If judgment was executed upon the Son of God, with such awful severity, when our iniquities were laid upon him; what must be the end of those that live ungodly? But the influence of that doctrine of practical religion, time will not allow me to enlarge upon. It has been well illustrated by Mr. Witherspoon in his Letter to Mr. Hervey, Mr. Jennings in

his Discourse on preaching Christ, and many others.

A melancholly reflexion naturally arises, from what has been now proved, with which I shall conclude this Dissertation. Is it not evident, from what we see in the world around us, and what we feel in our own hearts, that faith is not to be found in the generality of those who call themselves Christians, and that even, in the best, it is feeble and inconstant? If men realized the joys of God's chosen, the dreadfulness of God's wrath, and the heights and depths of redeeming love; could they, think you, make so light a matter of offending God? Would they be so eager in seeking, so transported in obtaining, so afraid of losing the riches, and honours, and pleasures of life? Or, would they, when deprived of these, account their All lost, and refuse to be comforted? Would they talk of earthly things with such warm emotion, and of heavenly things with such cool indifference? Would thoughts of these last, rarely arise in their breasts, and impress them in a faint, languid, undiscernable manner? Alas! the thoughts, affections, pursuits, words, and actions of men, too evidently show, that the great things of salvation are seldom weighed in that just balance, which would make the best of times comforts, and the worst of her evils appear in comparison light and inconsiderable. Mean time the growth of infidelity will not make that word of God of none effect. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." An enquiry into the nature and marks of faith, must therefore concern every one, to whom salvation is desirable, and damnation dreadful. And though an heir of glory may have

have inaccurate ideas, what faith is, and what are its marks, yet he who wants the thing itself, (and every unholy person wants it) is as yet in the broad way leading to destruction, nay, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. Let such therefore, lift up their voice for this heavenly gift, seek it as silver, search for it more than for hid treasures, and never give over seeking and striving (q), till God, by his spirit, work in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and a work of faith with power.

(q) The importance of using the means of grace, has, by many writers, been shown consistent with the necessity of supernatural light to produce faith. See Nymphae to Sosipater. Edin. 1761. Let. 5, and 9.



## DISSERTATION IV.

*The Law of NATURE sufficiently propagated to HEATHENS.*

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### THE P R E F A C E.

THE following Dissertation was occasioned by reading Dr. Campbell's late book on the Necessity of Revelation, where the insufficiency of mere reason, to conduct men to the knowledge of the existence of the Deity, and the immortality of their own souls, has, with a great profusion of learning to very little purpose, been contended for.

One may, at first sight, imagine, that it argues no good-will to the cause of Christianity, to attack an author who has of late so much distinguished himself in its defence, and who, instead of employing his pen on these mean and insignificant controversies, which have ingrossed the attention of too many of our Scots clergy, has embarked in the defence of our holy religion, in opposition to that torrent of Deism and Infidelity which threatens its destruction. Happy for Scotland there are some who think it a matter of greater importance, to make Infidels converts to the Christian faith, than to render Christians the violent Partizans of a particular sect!

That sentiments of this kind, and a sense of the danger that threatens us from the growth of Infidelity, were the

the Doctor's motives, in publishing his performance, the principles of charity oblige me to believe. But however much I am pleased with his general design, yet there are some positions laid down in the prosecution of it, that I cannot help refusing my assent to; and this liberty, I am persuaded, the Doctor himself will readily allow me; since, as he observes from the judicious Hooker, "Whatever is spoken of God, or things pertaining to God, otherways than as the truth is, though it seem an honour, it is an injury." To lie for the truth, is not only a needless piece of service, but an injurious one too. Our religion is so strongly attested, and attended with so unanswerable evidence, that it scorns to be supported by Falshood, or raise its fame by slander and detraction. It has a firmer and more stable foundation than the ruins of philosophy. But when arguments in its defence are stretched further than their nature allows, which I am apt to think is the present case, the consequence too often is, that men, seeing an argument has not all that force which an author pretends, conclude it has none at all; nay, perhaps, without further examination, reject the opinion in support of which it is brought.

These considerations prevailed with me to make publick the following reflections, wherein I have, with all the shortness and perspicuity I was able, proposed certain difficulties to the Doctor's scheme. Why the author's name is not prefixed to them it is needless to say. Let them appear in their native strength, without that additional disadvantage, which the publishing such a circumstance would give them.

As the author never made the English language his study, it is hoped any grammatical improprieties, which have escaped him, will be pardoned.

MAY 1741.

K 5.

S E C-

## SECTION I.

THE design of the learned Dr. Campbell, in his treatise on the *Necessity of Revelation*, is (as he informs us, p. 21.) "to examine the scheme of Deism, laid down in *Christianity as old as the Creation*; where it is asserted, That men are fully able, of themselves, without foreign assistance, to discover all the articles of natural religion that are necessary to their happiness; and that a wise and good God can impose upon mankind nothing relating to religion that is not discoverable by the human mind, or that is not immediately founded in the nature of things: so that if a scheme of religion is offered to the world, wherein there are contained religious articles of faith and manners, that lie beyond human discovery, or have no immediate foundation in nature, but are positive institutions, depending on will and authority, such a system of things can never be admitted as a divine revelation."

I join with the Doctor in thinking, that the confuting these notions is an infallible way of demolishing Deism; but it is somewhat strange, that when so much time has been spent by him, in confuting one of the articles of Deism contained in these assertions, the other, of equal, if not greater importance, should not be in the least struck at, viz. That men are not obliged to receive any doctrine, whose immediate foundation in nature, when once the doctrine is revealed to them, they cannot discern. A Deist may pretend, that it does not concern him to know how mankind

kind originally came by their religion; whether they discovered it by the use of reason, or had it revealed to them by God. But that he sees no obligation on men to receive any doctrine, for which they have not the same evidence which they have for the grand principles of natural religion, viz. A necessary connection with eternal truths; this hypothesis seems not to be in the least shaken by any thing the Doctor has advanced. Nay, people of little charity might be apt to imagine he had some secret view in this piece of negligence, especially as he is pleased, p. 20. to join together, in the same sentence, mysteries and very trifles, as the causes of the divisions and confusions that have arisen in the world.

There are two or three passages in the Doctor's book, which persons of this stamp might alledge to justify such an inference. One is, p. 44. "In  
" matters of religion (says he) no point of know-  
" ledge or article of faith, no external or bodily  
" motion enjoined by positive institution, can be  
" of any value or moment, unless they promote  
" an observance of natural religion; so that if  
" any thing can be supposed in the nature of  
" God, or, in his dealings with mankind, in the  
" nature of man, or in the relations between  
" God and man, whereof the knowledge has no  
" influence upon our minds to engage and im-  
" prove us in the study and pursuit of natural re-  
" ligion, such things must be accounted of no  
" weight or importance. Indeed, the discovery  
" of truth is always agreeable, and the bare per-  
" ception of such things as are here supposed to  
" relate to God and man, may afford some plea-  
" sure to one's mind by itself; but of what con-  
" sequence can such things prove with respect to

" social beings, when they produce no social  
" happiness, or contribute nothing to heighten  
" and raise our love and devotion towards God,  
" or to excite and enlarge our kind affections to-  
" wards men ? One should think, that the  
" knowledge of these things is idle speculation,  
" wherein social beings have no concern or in-  
" terest. And it appears full as evident, that all  
" bodily motions, or external observances, en-  
" joined by positive institution, that do not assist  
" us in cultivating the duties of natural religion,  
" are wholly idle and trifling, and upon no ac-  
" count to be regarded."

If the Doctor here means, what at first sight one would imagine, that we are not obliged to yield our assent to any doctrine, or receive any positive institution, except we see in that doctrine or institution a peculiar and natural tendency to excite in us love to God, or benevolence to men, or some other particular duty ; if this, I say, is his meaning, then what he asserts is utterly false ; for God, no doubt, has a right to impose upon us precepts indifferent in their own nature ; nay, in some cases, it may be fit to impose such precepts, the better to insure us to obey the law of God, from regard to the authority of the legislator. Now this is an end which any rule that God enjoins must infallibly promote, however trifling it may be in itself. But this is not all : we find subjects are, in many cases, under an obligation to obey the laws of their governors, tho' they do not know on what account they were enacted ; partly because the reasons of some laws may lie above their comprehension ; partly because, in some cases, legislators may have just enough motives to enact such and such laws, when,

when, at the same time, reasons of state may require that these motives should not be publickly known. And if this be so, are not we, short-sighted creatures, under a much stronger obligation to obey the commands of God, which may have the justest reasons in themselves, though we cannot discern them?

If all that the Doctor means is, That except a precept have, at least, a general tendency to promote obedience from a regard to the divine authority, we are not to regard it, then all his flow of language is trifling and useless; for, by this principle, which is certainly a true one, we may be obliged to perform rites not only trifling in themselves, and that have no natural tendency to promote social happiness, but that are burdensome to individuals, and prejudicial to societies. Were not many of the Mosaical rites, and was not the command for extirpating the Canaanites, of this nature? And would not a command, to pull down our houses, and quit our possessions, tho' it would have no tendency to promote social happiness, yet oblige us to obedience on this hypothesis?

There is another passage in the Doctor's book, p. 50. which it is equally hard for me to explain. "The religion of nature, says he, is our most valuable property, and the only sure means of our lasting happiness." How far this reflects on that way of salvation, which the gospel has revealed, or how it is consistent with the words of the apostle Paul, that, "by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified," I leave the reader at liberty to judge.

But whatever be our author's sentiments as to one of the articles of Deism, contained in the passage

passage cited from Tindal, or whatever his reasons for not considering it, yet, without doubt, the part of the argument he here treats is of vast importance; for the shewing that some nations and persons have, notwithstanding their natural reason, been ignorant of the great truths of natural religion, is a proof, though not the principal one, of the great benefit the world has received from Christianity; and, at the same time, an excellent answer to all objections against our religion, drawn from the imperfection of its promulgation; since, if God may suffer natural religion to be in fact not universally known, without any impeachment on his justice or goodness, What should oblige him to communicate the knowledge of revealed religion to all mankind?

I am glad therefore to see that any of our Scots-clergy employ their pens in so useful a manner, in opposition to the enemies of religion. But a good cause may be supported by a bad argument; and a good argument may be strained too much. That this last is the case here, will, I doubt not, be made appear in the sequel.

## S E C T I O N II.

**T**HE argument the Doctor proposes to make good is, That mankind, left to themselves, without supernatural instruction, are not of themselves able, in the exercise of their reason, i. e. their power of comparing things together and perceiving their relations, to discover the being and perfections of God, and the immortality of human souls, in the knowledge and belief of which all religion is founded. This impossibility of

of discovering these articles, he afterwards informs us, he does not mean to be absolute, i. e. such as, that the supposing mankind to discover them, should involve a contradiction, but only of so strong a nature, that there is no reason to think mankind would ever, in fact, have discovered these truths without revelation or tradition.

In opposition to this, I shall here attempt to prove, That God has afforded the Heathen world such advantages for the discovering and receiving these truths, that their ignorance or disbelief of them could be owing to nothing but their own negligence or perverseness.

Let me observe, then, that though, in some cases, a law may oblige a person, who has no actual knowledge of it, yet it is the opinion of all good moralists, and seems evident from the first principles of the law of nature, that no law whatsoever can be binding on a person who is under an absolute inability of knowing it. Thus Grotius in his excellent treatise, *De jure belli ac pacis*, l. 2. c. 20. § 43. "Nam ignorantia legis, " ficut inevitabilis si sit, tollit peccatum: Ita " etiam, cum aliqua negligentia conjuncta, de- " lictum minuit." And, l. 2. c. 23. § 13. he carries the matter still further, and asserts, that no person can act unjustly, without knowing he does so. "Injuste enim nemo agit, nisi qui & " scit se injuste agere." Puffendorff, in his small piece, *De off. Hom. & Civ.* l. 1. c. 2. § 6. says, " Ceterum, ut lex vim suam, in animis eorum " quibus fertur, exferere possit, requiritur cog- " nitio tum legislatoris, tum ipsius legis." Professor Carmichael, in his notes upon that passage, rightly denies this; but, at the same time, intimates there, and plainly asserts in his first Sup-  
plement,

plement, §' 13. " That, in order to a law's im-  
" posing an obligation on us, there is requisite,  
" not indeed the actual knowledge of it, but its  
" being sufficiently promulgated." His words in  
the last cited passage are, " Sed ut actio quævis  
" humana, vel ejus omissione, constituatur, actio  
" moralis, atque adeo homini imputabilis ut bona  
" vel mala, per supradicta accedere debet lex,  
" actionem istam præcipiens vel vetans; Dei ni-  
" mirum voluntas idoneis declarata indiciis; iis,  
" sc. circa quæ, ut & circa existentiam condi-  
" onum, quas forte lex ea supponit, si quis ra-  
" tione sua recte & debita cum attentione utere-  
" tur, ex iis Dei voluntatem, sibique juxta eam  
" hac in parte incumbens officium, posit cog-  
" noscere." I need not enlarge on this subject,  
as, I believe, none will alledge, that God gave  
a law to men, and punished them for the breach  
of it, while yet, at the same time, he left them  
under a moral incapacity of knowing it. If then  
the law of nature is obligatory upon Heathens,  
and they inexcusable for the breach of it, which  
no Christian, so far as I know, ever yet denied,  
Does it not follow, that it was not a thing so im-  
possible, as the Doctor represents, for them to  
have discovered the precepts of it? I could wish  
the Doctor would explain his sentiments as to  
these points; if a law can bind without sufficient  
promulgation; and if that promulgation can be  
reckoned sufficient, which leaves persons under a  
moral incapacity of knowing a law?

It may perhaps be alledged, as an answer to  
the argument here advanced, that though the igno-  
rance the Heathens lie under of the law of na-  
ture is invincible, yet it cannot excuse them from  
the punishment due to disobedience, as being the  
consequence.

consequence of original sin, which, in its cause, and principle, is voluntary. I shall content myself with Placette's reply to this, (in his Treatise, *on Conscience*, l. 2. c. 7.) till once I see its fallacy displayed, viz. "That it may well bear dispute, whether an action is therefore criminal, because it is voluntary in its principle. Let us suppose, says he, a man to have been punished with the loss of his hands for a crime voluntarily committed. Would it not be thought very unjust to command him to work in this his miserable condition ? and yet his present incapacity was, as to its principles, voluntary ; but being involuntary in itself, it will no doubt be admitted for his excuse." Another supposition may, perhaps, make the application of Placette's observation to the case in hand more easy. In some unknown region, the way of propagating new laws was, to give a written copy of them to every person in the kingdom, with a view to oblige every one to learn to read ; and, the better to obtain this design, sufficient care was taken, that no person should be instructed what laws were made in any other manner. In this kingdom Bævius commits a trespass, for which his eyes are put out ; I ask, whether he could be justly punished for transgressing a positive law made in the kingdom, after that punishment was inflicted, when it was impossible for him to learn the knowledge of that law in the common way, and no extraordinary method was provided to inform him of it ?

If this answer will not satisfy, Placette gives another in the same place, which, perhaps, may have more weight with some. He observes, that there are some laws which prescribe such duties,

as

as are holy, just and unchangeable in themselves, which yet it is impossible to have had the least suspicion of, without express *Revelation*. He instances in that law which commands us to worship the Son and the Holy Spirit, which certainly, however reasonable in itself, could not have been known without *Revelation*. Having observed this, he infers, that Heathens, invincibly ignorant of the law of nature, could not be condemned, purely because that ignorance was the consequence of a thing voluntary in its principle, viz. original sin, because if all ignorance of this sort were criminal, the ignorance of the worship due to the Son of God, and of other precepts of that nature, must be so likewise; for even of that and such like precepts we could never have been ignorant, had man continued in his primitive perfection.

Since then it was possible for the Heathens to discover the law of nature, it follows, that it must have been possible for them to know the being and perfections of God also; for, without such knowledge, it was impossible for them, if not to perceive a moral difference in actions, at least to learn their duties to God, which, however, make a considerable part of the law of nature.

If it be said, That it was indeed possible for the Heathens to discover the law of nature, but that this possibility did not take its rise from the natural strength of their reason, but from the opportunities they had to learn these truths by tradition, conversation with the Jews, and above all, by the care the civil magistrate used in establishing the belief of future rewards and punishments, and, the divine government of the world, without which he saw society could not subsist; if this, I say, should be alledged, and that of consequence  
all

all my reasoning here is of no force against the Doctor's hypothesis, I shall grant this a sufficient reply to my argument, if the Doctor will own, that one way or other the Heathens had a power of discovering the law of nature; for this will be sufficient to shew their inexcusableness in acting contrary to its dictates; which, methinks, it will be impossible for one of the Doctor's principles to do, without espousing that hypothesis. But then the Doctor will be obliged, upon this hypothesis, to shew particularly in what way it was possible for the Heathens, notwithstanding the weakness of their reason, to attain such knowledge of the law of nature. A treatise on this subject, judiciously writ, wherein the several opportunities the Heathens had of informing themselves of natural religion and morality, should be traced out, and their different degrees of divine and moral knowledge, according to these different opportunities, shewn; such a treatise, I say, would cast a new light on the origin and progress of religion amongst the Heathens, and would demonstrate, that the care of the civil magistrate, the notions of certain philosophers, the traditions preserved in the heathen world, the opportunities they enjoyed of conversing with those whom God had favoured with a revelation of his will, especially when added to the force of natural conscience, and that strength of reason, which many of the Heathens seemed endued with, were more than sufficient to shew the inexcusableness of the vices of the heathen world. But this, I'm afraid, we have no reason to expect from the Doctor, since he attempts to confute Dr. Hyde and others, (*vide p. 37. 1.*) who have asserted, the Heathens had right notions of morality,

religion is nothing but a cheat. So that it is only the practical consequences of the truths I have just now mentioned, that make wicked men refuse to believe them, when proposed to their consideration. Now, the case is quite otherwise with a person supposed entirely ignorant of the divine existence. By a chain of reasoning that he occasionally falls into, perhaps about motion, or some other natural phænomenon, he discovers this important truth. The wickedness of his mind cannot hinder his making the discovery, because, being entirely ignorant of the consequences of that doctrine, which are the only things he would startle at, these consequences can have no influence upon him to prevent his making the discovery. I grant indeed, that after the truth is discovered, they may prevail with him to reject it, and persuade him there is some flaw in the arguments which led him to the knowledge of it; or, if he does not go so far as entirely to reject it, may at least influence him to detain it in unrighteousness. Which last was certainly the case of many of the Heathens. But how a consequence can have any influence upon the mind before it is known, is, I own, past my comprehension; and yet this must be the case, if we suppose that the practical consequences of the divine existence prevent men from finding out that truth; unless, perhaps, it be said, that the consequences of a doctrine may be known, before the doctrine of which they are consequences. But this is as absurd in logicks, as it would be in natural philosophy, to assert, that an effect may possibly exist before the being that causes it. Since then, neither the natural abstruseness of the truths of religion,

religion, nor yet the wickedness of our minds, render it impossible for us to discover them, it must be owned there is no such impossibility.

#### S E C T I O N IV.

WHEN I wrote the foregoing section, the argument contained in which seems almost demonstrative, I could see no shadow of an objection to the former part of it, from the discoveries men had made in the mathematics, where a long and abstruse series of reasoning was necessary to come at a conclusion, to the possibility of their making discoveries in natural religion, of propositions which require a shorter series of reasoning to come at them.

I could see no way of eluding the force of the argument, but either by shewing that such propositions in mathematics, &c. were not discovered by unassisted reason; or else, that the first principles by which we come to the knowledge of the mathematics, &c. lie more obvious to human notice, than those by which we come to the knowledge of natural religion. The shewing either of these propositions true, would indeed be a sufficient answer to what I have alledged, but it will be no easy task to make good either of them.

However, as I would not willingly conceal any thing that tends to weaken my argument, I shall here take notice of a passage or two in the Doctor's book, where he argues from the weakness of our understandings, to shew our inability of discovering the fundamental articles of natural religion.

In order to shew the impossibility of mere reason's discovering the immortality of souls, he insists on the improbability of its acquiring any notion

notion of their immortality. " If, says he, " p. 84. now, after all the improvements mankind has acquired, the most abstracted and contemplative philosopher is not able to form any direct or immediate notion of the nature and substance of a pure spirit; how it exists independent of matter, or thinks and operates in a separate state; if this is so, how is it to be imagined, that a man who never was trained to speculation, and therefore only goes upon the ideas he has by his senses, can ever come to suspect there are such beings really existing?" He goes on with a great deal more to the same purpose, in order to shew how hard it is for the mind of man to conceive a notion of a pure spirit; and, to strengthen his argument, mentions several modern opposers of the doctrine of the soul's immateriality, and raises difficulties against it, capable of perverting an unwary reader, without taking any notice of the excellent solutions they have met with.

Not to remark, that it was little to his purpose to argue on the difficulty of men, not accustomed to speculation, acquiring an idea of immaterial substances, when he was enquiring into the abilities, not of the vulgar and illiterate, but of the greatest philosophic geniuses antient Greece or Rome ever produced: waving this, I shall only observe, that the whole of the above reasoning rests upon two suppositions, both of them equally false.

The first is, that there was no other way for the antients to have discovered the soul's immortality, but by inferring it from the immateriality. This is so far from truth, that there were several other propositions capable of being discovered

covered by these philosophers, that demonstrate the immortality of the soul with the highest evidence, and, in a manner, much more easy and natural, than that by which the immortality of the soul is inferred from its immateriality. Nay, not only might the soul's immortality be discovered by persons not satisfied of what sort of substance it was, from arguments of a moral nature, but even such as supposed it material might have drawn, and, as I shall afterwards shew in the eighth section, probably did draw a very plausible argument for the soul's immortality, from that very hypothesis.

The other principle necessary for the support of the Doctor's argument, is, that reason can discover nothing without having a clear idea of the thing so discovered ; for without this supposition, all the Doctor's reasoning will amount to nothing like a proof, that reason could not discover the immateriality of the soul. But the absurdities of such a supposition are too manifest to need being pointed out. Thus it would follow from it, that no positive or negative property of any quantity or number could be found out by any, but such as had distinct notions of the said quantities and numbers, with their said properties : and yet I would much suspect the veracity of a mathematician, who should tell me, he was able to form a distinct idea of all the quantities and numbers, of whose properties he is able to demonstrate somewhat.

This will sufficiently obviate what the Doctor has advanced as to the difficulty of finding out the soul's immortality. In Sect. v. p. 180. & seqq. where he goes on to consider, in the same manner, if the being of God might have been

discovered by mere reason, what he advances has still less appearance of reason. Indeed he sufficiently proves, that mankind would be apt to imagine the heavenly bodies, nay, every thing endued with motion, to be animated. But as to his thinking it equally natural for mankind, upon perceiving how much their interest depends upon the heavenly bodies, to act in the same manner towards them, in order to appease their anger, or engage their favour, as towards one another, and of consequence to kiss the hand to them, and pay them other marks of reverence and esteem, the case is different. For their seeing the celestial bodies equal and uniform in their motions, would make them believe, that their motions were not voluntary, but caused by the power of God, or some other being superior to them. And this would lead them, on the one hand, not to consider the celestial bodies, as the bestowers of these blessings they derived from their influences, and, on the other, excite their gratitude and thankfulness to that superior being, who had so admirably contrived and directed every thing to promote their welfare and happiness. Thus would the heavens have declared the glory of God, and the earth shewn forth his handy work, even to those who imagined them animated by intelligent beings. And, in fact, we find several of the antient asserted the heavenly bodies to be animate, without ascribing divinity to them: nay, so far as I know, Pythagoras, Plato, and Balbus in Cicero, were the only philosophers of character who asserted their divinity; whereas Thales, Aristotle, Lucretius, amongst the antient philosophers, nay, even Maimonides a Jew, Origen and Tycho Brache, Christians,

Christians, and Herbert a Deist, were of opinion that they were animated bodies.

I know no other objection of moment against my reasoning in the foregoing section, except one, which equally concerns this, and all other speculative arguments on subjects of this nature; but I hope the Doctor will think it sufficiently obviated, by what I am to advance in a following section, on the proper way of determining such questions.

#### S E C T I O N V.

I GO on now to consider what light scripture may afford us in this controversy; and the first passage I shall mention is the xixth psalm. "The heavens," says the Psalmist, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy work," i. e. such marks of a wise and powerful efficient cause appear in the celestial bodies, as declare aloud to every person who does not shut his ears against their voice, that God is their creator. I believe I might be excused from taking notice of what some writers alledge, in answer to the argument from this verse, viz. that the Psalmist here speaks of the Jews, and that it is no wonder they, who were already acquainted with the divine existence, should be confirmed in that sentiment, by viewing the works of creation. I shall acquiesce in this answer, when once it is proved, that the heavens are no where visible but from the land of Judea, or that all, save the Jews, are so short-sighted, that they cannot discern them. Mean while I shall only observe, that the Psalmist

mist does not merely say, the heavens illustrate the glory of God, but that they declare it, i. e. discover and make it manifest to those who are ignorant of it. Again, ver. 2. we are told, "That day unto day uttereth speech," &c. i. e. the works of creation are not the only proclaimers of the divine existence, since, almost every day, some occurrences happen of so remarkable a nature, that they are sufficient to teach men, not only the existence of a deity, but that his providence rules over, and disposes of all persons and things, so as that nothing happens in this world without his direction. But lest perhaps it might be alledged, that how much soever the works of creation and providence may preach the being and perfections of a God; yet that all is in vain, since ignorant man is too deaf to hear, or too dull to understand their language: we are informed, ver. 3, and 4, that "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard," &c. i. e. There are no nations, however distant they may be in their situations, or different in their languages, but hear, if they do not stop their ears, the voice of these universal heralds, these common instructors of mankind, the works of God, whose language is so plain and obvious, that such as do not understand it, can have none but themselves to blame for that ignorance.

I shall next consider, Rom. i. 18, 19, 20, 21. The apostle there expressly asserts, that the heathens were so utterly inexcusable, in acting contrary to the law of nature, as sufficiently to vindicate the divine justice, in inflicting the severest penalties upon them. The medium he takes to prove this is, that the heathens had the being and

and perfections of God manifested to them by the works of creation. To be more particular, ver. 18. the apostle assigns the reason why the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men, viz. because they hold the truth in unrighteousness. How men can be said to hold the truth in unrighteousness, who do not hold it at all, who have no knowledge of it, nay, who are under a moral impossibility of discovering it, is what I own I cannot unravel. Ver. 19. we are told, that "that which may be known of God is manifest in (or as the word may be translated, amongst) them; for God hath shewed it to them," i. e. the natural and moral perfections of God, so far as men can know them, were known among the heathens. Ver. 20. informs us how they came by this knowledge; "for, says the apostle, the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, &c." Here is it not plainly asserted, that the divine perfections are clearly seen from the works of creation, and that they have been so ever since the world was made? And is not this inconsistent with their sentiments, who not only assert, that it is impossible, by bare reason, to gather the divine being and attributes from the contemplation of his works, but also that such was the condition of the heathens for many ages after the creation, that they could in no way whatsoever attain the knowledge of these truths?

The second chapter of the Romans affords also considerable evidence of what I am proving. Ver. 12. it is said, that even those who have sinned without the written law shall perish; and, to vindicate the justice of this, we are told, that

natural conscience stands them instead of a law. This the apostle proves, ver. 14. from the virtuous lives of some of the heathens, which demonstrated, that they had some law or rule to direct them by: and, ver. 15. from the power of conscience, in accusing or excusing men, according to their different conduct. Now, what can be the rise of this principle of conscience, but a sense of our being accountable to God for our conduct and behaviour in the world? And it will be hard to shew, how a mind, that has no notion of the divine existence, or its own immortality, could attain such a sense of things.

I shall conclude the section with summing up the evidence the scriptures I have mentioned give as to the point in question, leaving it to the reader to judge, how far they tend to cast the Deist's cause. We find then, that the heathens were not only capable of discovering the truths of religion, but that they actually knew them; else, how could they be said to *bold the truth in unrighteousness*, or be blamed, because when *they knew God, they glorified him not as God?* Further, that the heavenly bodies, and other works of God, not only proclaimed the divine existence, but proclaimed it with so loud and so clear a voice, that every nation heard the sound thereof. And in fine, that the divine perfections, so far as human reason could know them, were known to the heathens, God having given a clear manifestation of them, by the things he hath made. All this seems not very consistent with the discovery of these truths by unassisted reason, being an event, which in no age, in no particular country of the world, has ever happened,

ed, nor to the end of the world ever will happen.  
Which the Doctor confidently asserts, p. 72.

### S E C T I O N . V I .

If is now time to consider what proofs the Doctor uses to make good his assertion ; and, in the general, he informs us, " That we are to examine questions of this nature, not by speculation, but common experience and matter of fact." And, p. 12. he owns, " That the contrary opinion to his appears very plausible, nay, almost demonstrably true in speculation." If this be really the case, I don't see, but the Doctor may with great ease give up the cause, for which he has so earnestly contended in this performance. Without doubt, forming schemes on mere speculation is often dangerous and unsafe ; but yet it must be owned, that when the principles one lays down are certain, and the consequences naturally and unavoidably flow from these principles, in this case, one may safely assent to these consequences as also certain ; and this way of determining a question, when it can be had, is much preferable to that of experiment. I may add, that it is impossible, in the present case, for experience to bring the argument to a certainty on the Doctor's side ; for, should he prove, that no person as yet, by mere unassisted reason, has discovered the momentous truths of natural religion, it would be as unreasonable for us to infer from thence, that it is impossible for them ever to do so, as it would have been for an angel some hundred years ago to think, that the arts of printing,

ing, the Newtonian system, &c. were things impossible for mankind to discover, because no man before that time had hit upon them. Nay, a still greater absurdity than this would follow from the Doctor's argument, viz. that no being has a power to do or think any thing but what it actually does or thinks; so that it must have been impossible for any power of the divine being to have been without exercise. Whence the eternity of the world may be inferred, nay its infinity also; because, by this way of reasoning, God could not have infinite power without exerting it, and so making an infinite world. Yet, spite of these absurdities, the Doctor asks, p. 72: with an emphasis, "Whether that event can be called possible, which in no age, in no particular country of the world has ever happened?" And he adds, "To the end of the world never will happen. A strange possibility (continues he) this must be, which in no age, in no particular country of the world ever took effect, notwithstanding mankind bent their wits in that particular way, wherein it is most likely to have been effected." Groundless allegation! For the philosophers bent not their understandings to find out the first efficient cause of all things, that being a point little contested in the early ages of the world; but they rather attempted to account for the formation of the world in a mechanical way, in order to shew how ingenious they were in framing hypotheses, or, perhaps, out of a malicious view of persuading their disciples, that there was no necessity of recurring, with the vulgar, to the interposition of God in the production of the universe, since it might be accounted for by what we call second causes, without calling in the first.

S E C T.

## SECTION VII.

BUT for once let us suppose, that if unassisted reason has not hitherto discovered the truths of natural religion, it will follow, that it is impossible it ever should. Let us see what the Doctor will gain by this concession. Great as it is, it is too small to do him any Service. For, will he have the confidence to say, that he has examined every thing necessary to give him a full knowledge of the sentiments of the antients, and whence they were derived? That the philosophical sentiments, and religious notions of every age since the creation, and every nation under the sun, are so compleatly known by him, that not one of them has escaped his view? Allow that all the remains of Greek and Roman, Chinese and Arabic antiquity have been, searched by him; and that not one of these remains affords a proof that bare philosophy ever found out the truths of natural religion; yet is it not possible, that, spite of this silence in ancient records, some philosopher or other, in these nations, might have hit on a series of reasoning that led him to the knowledge of the truths of natural religion, but for fear of the consequences which often follow the venting unauthorised speculations, when opposite to vulgar prejudices, might judge it best to keep his thoughts to himself? But even tho' we should allow, that none of the most penetrating geniuses in these countries were ever capable of such abstruse speculations; yet can he, with equal certainty, affirm, that no country whatsoever, whose history

he has no acquaintance with, ever produced philosophers who made such discoveries? Does he know how matters stand with nations he never heard of or read about? What an admirable way of reasoning would this be? "The countries I am acquainted with, had not reason in such perfection as to discover a God, and the relation that they, as his creatures, stand in to him; therefore the countries I never heard of must have been equally unable to make such discoveries." If this argument is good in the mouth of the Doctor, I should be glad of a reason, why it would have been an unphilosophic conclusion for a barbarous American to have argued, that gun-powder could not have been the invention of mortals, since, had that been the case, some of his sage ancestors, or these wise nations whose annals he was acquainted with, must have invented it. It would be wasting of paper, and tiring the patience of the heaviest reader, to go on in exposing such absurdities.

A very good reason may be assigned, why, notwithstanding men's natural ability to discover the existence of a God, from the contemplation of his works, yet, in fact, scarce any philosopher in these nations, whose records are extant, is said to have made such a discovery. The being and perfections of God were not unknown, but these traditions which the civil magistrate, from a sense of their usefulness to society, made it his business to support, preserved the knowledge of them in the heathen world. Hence, if a philosopher had seen, by speculative arguments, the necessity of admitting the divine existence, he would have found it quite unnecessary, in the early ages of the world, to make public his arguments,

gements, universal tradition being a sufficient support to the truths of religion; but when once idolatry had crept in, what was before unnecessary would be now unsafe. As that very chain of reasoning which led a man to the knowledge of the divine existence, must also discover to him the unreasonableness, in many instances, of the vulgar religion, the opposing of which might have drawn after it no very agreeable treatment. Thus the first philosophers thought it useless to argue men into a belief of what they were already persuaded of; while their successors, holding the truth in unrighteousness, thro' a mean and dastardly principle, concealed their sentiments from mankind, lest, had they published them, they might have suffered for them; and that they might satisfy their own minds as to this dishonourable conduct, they endeavoured either to convince themselves that all religion was but a cheat, and that the arguments which had led them to it were fallacious and inconclusive; or else that it was the part of a wise man, whatever his inward sentiments might be, outwardly to conform to the religion of his country.

To enquire then whether reason ever, in fact, discovered the divine existence, we must turn our eyes to such as had no traditional knowledge of God, and no prejudice against the divine existence. But to find such will be no easy task. An instance however the Doctor may find in Fabricius's account of the writers on the truth of christianity, who, c. 20. mentions a book, entitled, "Philosophus Autodidactos, sive epistola "Abi Jaafar Ebn Taphail, de Hai Ebn Yokd- "han, cuius infantis in deserta insula abjecti "exemplo ostenditur, quomodo citra institutio-

" nem humanam, ex inferiorum contemplatione  
" ad superiorum notitiam ascendere posse ratio  
" humana. Arabice cum latina Pocockii ver-  
" sione, Ox. 1701, 4to." Fabricius refers us, for an account of this curious piece, to the Bibliotheque universelle, T. 3. p. 76. and the history of the works of the learned for the year 1708. p. 365. I have not time to consider the genuineness of this account; but I'm sure, if genuine, 'tis a demonstration of the falsehood of the Doctor's hypothesis; and therefore, I think, if he persists in his opinion, he will be forced to convince the world of its falsehood.

But, perhaps, some will still alledge, that if none of the Greek or Roman philosophers, who were men of more than ordinary sagacity, and, as the Doctor informs us, bent their wits in that particular way in which it was most likely to make such discoveries; if none of these ever discovered, by bare reason, the truths of natural religion, the same may be safely concluded of all other philosophers. Tho', if this be alledged, I have already sufficiently obviated it, both in this and the end of the former section; yet, for the reader's further satisfaction, I shall shew in the next section, that the Doctor's representation of the antient philosophers, is not quite consistent with truth, and that they had greater opportunities to make discoveries in natural religion than he seems to think.

## SECTION VIII.

§ 1. WE are apt to imagine, that the antients were perfect dwarfs in natural philosophy, and unable to have made such discoveries, or invented such arts as later ages; and yet, in many instances, a more accurate enquiry would convince us, that these inventions, of which we so much boast, were known to antiquity, and came to be lost by the ignorance and barbarity introduced by the Goths and Vandals. If I am not mistaken, the art of teaching those born deaf to speak is an instance of this. Vinius, in his excellent commentary on the institutes, lib. 2. tit. 12. § 3. & l. 3. tit. 20. § 7. laughs at Justinian for providing for a case, which in fact could never happen, viz. that of a deaf man endued with speech; and he declares, in strong terms, that he thinks it absurd for one deaf to utter an articulate sound. Had that ingenious writer been acquainted with the art, which has of late been revived \*, of teaching the deaf to speak, he would not so rashly have condemned the emperor, but rather imagined, that in his time that art was known. My observations at present shall be confined to the most ancient philosophers.

§ 2. The philosophers of the Ionick sect, from Thales down to Socrates, employed most of their time in enquiries of a physical nature. In these speculations, they must have made no

\* See Morhoff Polyhist. tom. 2. l. 4. c. 3. § 13. & seqq  
l. 4. c. 1. § 6.

incon-

inconsiderable progress, if we may credit what ancient history records. I need not mention Thales's having calculated eclipses. We have facts related of these philosophers still more surprising, and which must argue a degree of the knowledge of nature, and a penetration of judgment, superior, in some instances, to that of modern philosophers. Thus Aristotle, Pol. 1. 7. and Cicero de Divinatione, l. 1. inform us, that Thales, by astronomy, foresaw, ere winter was past, that next year there was to be an unusual plenty of olives. Anaximander, Thales's scholar, tho' he seems to have been much inferior to his master, yet is recorded to have foretold an earthquake. A piece of skill, which a passage in Pliny's natural history, (l. 2. c. 79. p. 231. edit. Harduini, Par. 1685.) too remarkable to be here omitted, shews many of the philosophers endued with. His words are, "Præclara quædam esse & immortalis in eo, si credimus, divinitas perhibetur Anaximandro Milesio phýsico, quem ferunt Lacedemoniis prædixisse, ut urbem ac tecta custodirent : instare enim motum terræ, cum & urbs tota eorum corruit, & Taygeti montis magna pars ad formam puppis eminens abrupta, cladem insuper eam ruina pressit. Perhibetur & Pherecydi, Pythagoræ doctori, alia conjectatio, sed & illa divina : haustu aquæ e puto præsensisse, ac prædixisse ibi terræ motum. Quæ si vera sunt, quantum a Deo tandem videri possunt tales distare, dum vivant." What is here said of Pherecydes, is confirmed by Cicero de Divinatione, l. 2. The same is related of Anaxagoras by Ammianus Marcellinus, l. 22. and of Pythagoras by Eusebius, præp. ev. l. 10. and Jamblichus, vit. Pythag. l. 1. c. 23. These

These passages are so clear and express, as to the antients having predicted earthquakes, that he must have much of the sceptic about him, who can disbelieve the fact. One of the most judicious critics and accurate reasoners this age has produced, viz. Bp. Warburton in his Divine Legation of Moses, p. 318. seems still more to have ascertained it. The story, says he, of Pythagoras's predicting earthquakes, has much the air of a fable, and, I believe, has been generally ranked, as it is by Stanley, with the abundance of idle trumpery, which the enthusiastical Pythagoreans have raked together concerning him. Yet a late relation has fully vindicated the truth of it; and posterity, that could not profit by his knowledge, has, at last, confirmed the veracity of his history. Peter Dudley, Esq; in the Philosophical Transactions, No. 437. p. 72. speaking of an earthquake which lately happened in New-England, hath these remarkable words, "A neighbour of mine, that has a well  
" 36 feet deep, about three days before the  
" earthquake, was surprised to find his water,  
" that used to be very sweet and limpid, stink  
" to that degree that they could make no use  
" of it, nor scarce bear the house when it was  
" brought in; and thinking some carrion was  
" got into the well, he searched the bottom,  
" but found it clear and good, tho' the colour  
" of the water was turned whitish or pale. In  
" about seven days after the earthquake, his  
" water began to mend, and, in three days more,  
" returned to its former sweetness and colour." Thus Bp. Warburton, who, in the whole of that excellent performance, has cast a new light on the philosophy and theology of the antients, and

and applied his admirable discoveries to the most noble purposes. But Pythagoras must not have the honour of being the first who foresaw earthquakes from the taste of water. This we must ascribe to the Ionic sect, two philosophers whereof, we are informed in the above-cited passages, foretold earthquakes, viz. Anaximander and Anaxagoras.

If it were necessary, other proofs of the sagacity of these philosophers, and the advancements they had made in the knowledge of nature, might have been adduced. Certainly any, who have the least acquaintance with these matters, must at first sight perceive, that it was impossible for them to have made such discoveries, without a competent knowledge of the theory of motion. This, then, was one of the principal subjects of their researches; and these are the enquiries which I am about to show conducted them to the knowledge of the soul's immortality.

§ 3. The Ionic philosophers imagined, that all life, cogitation, motion, or activity of any sort, proceeded from a soul, which they defined a substance endued with a power to move itself, and other things. Hence they accounted these things, which we commonly reckon inanimate, as the loadstone and amber, to be endued with souls. Vid. Laert. vita Thaletis, p. 16. *juxta finem*, edit. H. Stephani, 1594. This moving principle was considered as the source of all activity. They observed, that the bodies around them lost their motion, and of consequence their activity. The cause of this they saw, was, that what motion they communicated to other bodies, they lost themselves; but that sort of matter, which

which thinks within us, (the proper motion whereof, as Plato observes in his *Timæus*, was to think, will, consult, love, hate, &c.) tho' it communicated motion to the body, yet they perceived still retained its own proper motion equal and unvariable, which convinced them, that, in some respect or other, the matter of the soul must have been of a different nature from that of the bodies around us, as it did not lose its motion in the way they lost theirs. Hence they termed the soul incorporeal, not imagining it strictly immaterial, but only of a different nature from the gross and common matter whereof the bodies around us are composed. Since then the soul did not lose its proper motion by the way of communication, (in which it resembled the deity, whose intrinsic perfections are not diminished by their being communicated to creatures) and they could think of no other way whereby it could be lost, they concluded that it would always retain its proper motion, i. e. be immortal. Accordingly we find Thales is mentioned as the first who held the soul's immortality. Vid. Laert. p. 16. probably, because he was the first who argued for it on the principles I have now mentioned; or the first who saw that this opinion was not only supported by tradition, and the universal consent of mankind, but had a foundation in nature and the reason of things.

But Dr. Campbell, p. 121. will by no means allow it probable, that Thales had any notion of the soul's immortality. His reasons are, that Thales seems to reckon the soul nothing but a certain quality in all matter capable of acting or moving; that he attributes a soul to the loadstone, because it moves iron, nay, expressly affirmed,

firmed, that all things are full of souls. From this the Doctor infers, that Thales was too deeply ignorant of the nature of the soul, to have any notion of its future existence. But these very considerations led me to make a quite different inference, viz. That Thales, being persuaded of the natural inactivity of common matter, concluded that all matter which moves, must be moved by a soul: and imagining it unphilosophical to explain the motion of the bodies around us, by the immediate influx of the supreme mind, he chose to say, that every particular body, which acts or moves, was animated by a soul. Let me now account for what the Doctor mentions in the same place, that Thales thought the souls which reside in the upper world immortal, these which are here below mortal. The case probably was, he observed, that whatever influence the sun and other celestial bodies have, in communicating motion, vigour or activity to any thing else, yet they always retained their own proper motion, not losing it by communication; whereas he observed, that stones, and other terrestrial bodies, lose whatever motion they communicate to one another, so that at last all their motion, and of consequence their life and activity, must needs come to an end. But this general observation of Thales, about terrestrial souls, had probably not a few exceptions, wherof this must have been one, that the souls of men were immortal; so that Augustine was probably mistaken, in imagining that Thales thought all souls below mortal, while he only asserted, that the bulk of them were so: or perhaps the expressions used by Augustine, De siv. Dei, l. 7. c. 6. were more extensive than the ideas

ideas that father had in his own mind. It is probable, that Anaxagoras likewise imagined the souls of beasts and men to be equally immortal; for he too ascribed a soul to all sorts of animated beings. His supposing the soul not elder than the body, proves indeed he could not conclude its immortality upon Pythagoras's principles, but he might upon Thales's, whom he seems in many things to have followed.

§ 4. The Doctor observes, pag. 94. & seqq. That the reasons of Plato and others, for the immortality of the soul, were of such a nature, that they could never have served as steps to lead them to the knowledge of that truth. But has our author never heard of conjectures having been framed upon very slight grounds, with respect to the existence and properties of things unknown, which time and further care have at last verified? Has not falsehood often been used by others, to conduct us to the knowledge of truth, and dispose us the better for its reception? And why may not we ourselves deduce a truth, as a consequence from a doctrine, which is either false, or if true, does not prove it? If very weak reasons will lead a person to believe an error he never before heard of, Why may they not be capable to persuade him of a truth also? Is there some unaccountable aversion in the human mind to truth, and propensity to error, that influences it to receive the latter on the most trifling account, while nothing short of demonstration can prevail with it to embrace the former? As to the argument Plato draws in his *Phædo*, p. 245. from the soul's self-motion, and being always in motion, to prove its immortality, let me offer a conjecture, which several circumstances render not improbable.

improbable. Plato, in the prosecution of his studies, one day hears an Ionick philosopher reasoning for the soul's immortality, on the principles mentioned in the former paragraph. Plato forgets the argument of the Ionick sage, and only retains a confused idea in his mind, that the medium from which it was drawn was motion. This sets him a-working, to hammer out an argument from that topick; and he falls upon that one cited by the Doctor, p. 96. which, however abstruse, confused, and mixed with error, contains in it plain vestiges of the reasoning just now mentioned. The same may be said of another of Plato's arguments mentioned by the Doctor, p. 104. However, I cannot but observe, that it does not look over-ingenuous, to cull out a few weak arguments to an author's disadvantage, who, every one knows, has reasoned admirably well, in other parts of his writings, on these very subjects.

§ 5. The Doctor remarks, p. 102. that all these philosophers, who held the immortality of the soul, did likewise hold its pre-existence, and inferred the former from the latter. How far this is true, I shall not pretend to judge, tho' I have good ground to think, that those of the Ionick school, who held the soul's immortality, did it upon quite different principles; and the Doctor has given us no evidence of their believing the soul's pre-existence; but, however this be, the scheme of the pre-existence of souls, was very universally believed. Though this might in part be occasioned from the tradition of all things being created in the space of six days, which it seemed hard to reconcile with the supposing souls every day creating; yet I am apt to think, that

the

the fitness of this scheme to resolve several difficulties about the misery of infants, &c. which, to the ancients seemed otherwise unanswerable, was the circumstance that contributed most to spread it; at least it is far from being so wild a delusion, or extravagant a conceit, as the Doctor is pleased to represent it.

§ 6. The Doctor, p. 112. & *segg.* makes some reflections on the opinion Plato and others had of the transmigration of souls. The truth of the case seems to be this: These philosophers saw that the soul was immortal, and would be rewarded or punished in another life proportionably to its conduct here; but being destitute of a revelation to inform them of the nature and duration of the rewards and punishments of another life, they fell on different schemes as their fancies directed them. Most of their schemes were monstrous and inconsistent, as being the offspring, not of a solid judgment, but of a roving imagination. That which Virgil represents, notwithstanding all its blemishes and defects, is one of the best and most distinct. Mean time, the doctrine of the transmigration does not prove that reason could not lead the Heathens to their notion of the soul's immortality, but only that they advanced things relating to that notion which reason could not support; and we find some, who maintained the soul's immortality, seemed, at the same time, convinced of the whimsicalness of these opinions, which the generality of its asserters embraced. And Xenophon sharply taxes Plato for having deserted Socrates, and embraced Pythagoras's monstrous doctrine of the transmigration. *Xenoph. epist. ad Aëbiniem*, p. 1000. A proof,

proof, that the genuine disciples of Socrates disbelieved the transmigration.

§ 7. So much for the immortality of the soul. A few remarks will suffice as to what the Doctor has advanced on the notions of the ancients about the divine existence. It has been already observed, that the imagining the sun and stars animate bodies, will be but a poor plea for idolatry, as it had no such tendency to excite it as the Doctor imagines.

But what the Doctor alledges, § 6. " That none of the ancient philosophers, in their searches into the first cause and origin of things, were led to discover the being and attributes of God; but that, on the contrary, they accounted air, fire, &c. the first principles of all things," will deserve some consideration. Three solutions may be given of this difficulty, which I shall just mention, leaving it to the reader to chuse which he likes best. The First is that of *Thomassius*, viz. That the first Ionick philosophers, supposing a first efficient cause, as what had never been called in question, spoke only of the second causes, which hitherto had been unknown, and but little searched into; imagining, that had they introduced a God in accounting for every particular effect, the search of second causes would be again laid aside, and men would content themselves with the knowledge of the first cause. But Bayle disapproves of this solution, and rather inclines to think, that the philosophers, despising the poets who were the most ancient heathen divines, as having maintained a variety of opinions without foundation in reason, carried their prejudices against them to such a pitch,

pitch, as often to oppose an opinion, for no other reason than that the poets defended it. He refers us, for confirmation of this, to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, lib. 3. cap. 4. p. 662. The last solution is, That indeed these philosophers foolishly reckoned God a material being ; nay, that some of them even proceeded so far, as to determine that the deity was such or such a particular kind of matter : But though in this they erred, yet, as they acknowledged in general a first cause of all things, so in particular they ascribed to it most of the properties we do to the true God, except unity and spirituality.

But even in these points Thales might possibly have been orthodox. Laertius informs us, p. 23. That he stiled the world, The most beautiful of all things, because it was the work of God. And is not this plainly enough ascribing its formation to one supreme cause ? As to the divine spirituality, Velleius expressly asserts, in Cicero's first book on the nature of the Gods, that he said, *God was the mind who had framed all things out of nature*. But Dr. Campbell won't allow the passage genuine, because immediately after Velleius asserts, that Anaxagoras was the first who ascribed to a mind the formation of the universe ; and it is not to be supposed Cicero would make him contradict himself in the space of two or three lines. I shall not observe how dangerous it is to reckon a passage supposititious, which must have been in these copies of *Cicero* that Minucius Fælix and Lactantius used, but rather resolve the difficulty, by proposing an alteration of two letters in the passage about Anaxagoras. Cicero's words are, *Inde Anaxagoras, qui accepit ab Anaximine disciplinam, primus*

*minus omnium rerum descriptionem & modum mentis infinitae, vi ac ratione designari & confici valuit.* Change the *primus* into *primam*, and you have at once a solution of the difficulty, and an observation of a difference betwixt Thales and Anaxagoras's sentiment, viz. That the latter only ascribed the original arrangement of things to God, imagining that every subsequent effect would follow in a natural and mechanical way from such arrangement.

§ 8. The Doctor goes on, § 7. to shew, “ That these ancient philosophers, who confessed the existence of an infinite mind, had such notions about the formation of things, that it is plain they were not led to the knowledge of the first cause from the effects he had produced. One, (says the Doctor, p. 334.) cannot well imagine what was the *dignus vindice nodus*, the particular effect, wherein Anaxagoras would find it necessary to drag in the agency of an infinite mind, when he makes men and all animals to rise from hotbeds and dunghills, and the stars to be great stones, torn from the earth by the violent whirling of the æther.” But is not a mind just as necessary to the formation of animals, if that disposition of things, which will naturally produce animals, cannot take place without the efficiency of a mind, as if the immediate interposal of a mind were necessary to the forming every particular animal. Now, the former of these was evidently Anaxagoras's opinion; so that the Doctor may easily see what was the *dignus vindice nodus*, that forced that philosopher to introduce a deity.

I shall conclude these sheets with the words of Jo. Alb. Fabricius, in his book on the *Truth of Christianity*,

Christianity, cap. 8. Itaque & adhuc sum in illa sententia, quod infelix, & religioni atque humano generi parum utilis vel honorificus; addo, & iniquus est labor, principes ingenuorum, & præstantissimos totius antiquitatis viros, invitos ac repugnantes trahere in societatem atheorum, & universum Ethnicismum confundere cum Spinozismo atque Atheismo, cum Apostolus quoque in Ethnicis non tam desideret cognitionem Dei, quam quod Deum quem ex operibus cognoscebant, non tanquam Deum honore sunt super omnia prosecuti.



## DISSERTATION V.

### On FREQUENT COMMUNICATING.

#### SECTION I.

**T**HE prejudices of many pious and well-disposed people, against the late overture of the synod of Glasgow and Air, concerning frequent communicating (*a*), make it necessary to acquaint them with the reasons on which that overture was founded, that men of honest minds may

(*a*) The overture of the synod of Glasgow and Air, Glasgow, 5th October 1748, was as follows :

A proposal from the presbytery of Glasgow, concerning the more frequent celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, being laid before the synod by their committee of overtures, the synod appointed a select committee to consider thereof, who reported as follows :

The committee humbly propose the following articles to the consideration of the very reverend synod; wherein they are unanimous in their judgment.

That the general proposal from the reverend presbytery of Glasgow, deserves the serious regard and attention of the synod.

That it would have an evident tendency to the reviving and promoting of true religion, that the Lord's Supper should be more frequently administered among us, than what generally obtains, that holy ordinance being celebrated only once a year in each parish, (excepting in a few places) and, in some parishes, but once in two years.

That,

may see if there is cause for that strange and hideous outcry which has been raised against it.

Others, better qualified for such a task, have thought fit to decline it. Several of my Fathers and brethren, both at the meeting of synod, and since, have urged me to undertake it: But their

That, if this be allowed, we must add, that the manner in which this holy ordinance is commonly administered among us, greatly obstructs the more frequent administration of it; and particularly the number of sermons on such occasions, and the many parishes thereby laid vacant on the Lord's Day, are accompanied with several great inconveniences, if not also, too often, with scandalous profanations of that holy Day.

That from all this the committee are of opinion, it would be for the interest and honour of religion, that some method were devised, whereby these inconveniences and abuses might be avoided, and the Lord's Supper more frequently celebrated, agreeably to the word of God, to the apostolic practice recorded therein, to the practice of the primitive church, and that of all other Protestant churches, as well as to several overtures and acts of assembly of this church in former times.

That, in the opinion of the committee, it would answer this purpose, if the Lord's Supper were celebrated at least four times a year, in every parish; and that only one day in the preceding week, either the Friday or Saturday, were employed in public fasting or preparation; and that the sacrament were administered on the same Sabbath in all the parishes of the same presbytery at least.

And lastly, That it may be proper the synod appoint the several presbyteries of their bounds to meet for considering the above proposal, and report their judgment on the several articles thereof to the synod, in April next, in order to the framing of an overture from their synod to be transmitted to next general assembly; and that this be communicated to the correspondents, to be laid before the neighbouring synods, at their next meeting.

The synod, having heard and considered the above report, did approve of the same, and accordingly transmitted, &c.

solicitations would scarce have moved me to publish any thing on the subject, so crude and indigested as what follows, had not some circumstances convinced me, that the silence of those who are convinced of the goodness of the overture has had much worse effects, than could have flowed from even the weakest defence.

The question, whether the synod's overture should be rejected or approved, depends on two subordinate enquiries. Is the design of dispensing the Lord's Supper in every congregation, at least four times a year, in itself good? And are the means proposed for gaining that end, the most proper, and least exceptionable?

§ 2. Let us begin with enquiring if the design of dispensing the Sacrament thus often is in itself a good one.—And here let us for once suppose, that there is no Scripture precept or pattern obliging us to frequent communicating.

Supposing this, it must at least be allowed, there is no restraint laid upon us, in the word of God, from partaking frequently of the Lord's Supper. If no precise time is fixed in Scripture for dispensing and receiving it, and if no precise degree of frequency is enjoined, yet none dare allege, that there is any time in which we are prohibited to dispense and receive that ordinance, or that any degree of frequency is absolutely prohibited. From this it follows, that we are left at liberty to dispense the Lord's Supper as often as is consistent with the right performance of other religious exercises, and the due discharge of the common duties of life.

And if such a measure of frequency is lawful, may I not venture a step further, and pronounce it, if not necessary, yet at least in the highest degree

gree expedient? If the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of so comforting and improving a nature, as almost all acknowledge it, should we not account the frequent enjoyment of it a privilege? And if God has not deprived us of that privilege, do we act a wise and friendly part for our own souls, in depriving ourselves of it?

To give this argument its due force, let us consider a little the nature and design of the Lord's Supper, and what benefits may be expected by those who worthily receive it.

It is the ordinance our Lord Jesus has peculiarly set apart to keep up the remembrance of his sufferings and death. There we see the loving and lovely *Jesus* laying down his life as a sacrifice and atonement for our sins; and shedding his precious blood to purchase for us a happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as eternity. We see the *Lord of Life* suffering a painful, an ignominious, an accursed *Death*; that by thus fulfilling the condition of the covenant of redemption, he might secure grace and glory, and every good thing, not to us only, but to *an innumerable multitude, which no man can number, of all tongues, and kindreds, and nations, and languages*. We behold the height and depth, the length and breadth of divine love to a perishing world: Of the *Father's* love in inflicting upon him such unparalleled sufferings, that we might not suffer; of his own love and condescension in cheerfully bearing them. We behold the *Son of Man* glorified, in bearing that load of wrath, without fainting under it, which would have sunk a whole world in irrecoverable misery. We behold *God* glorified in him, and *all* the divine perfections shining with united lustre, the justice of *God* sweetly combining with

his mercy to punish our Surety, that we the offenders might be forgiven. From a deep and heart-affecting sense, that we, and all the children of Men, who obtain salvation, must be wholly indebted to that amazing transaction for obtaining it; we are made to say, " God forbid " that we should glory, save in the cross of " Christ. We will remember thy love more " than wine: We will rejoice in thy salvation; " and in the name of thee our God will we lift " up our banners: For thou, Lord, hast made " us glad through thy work, and we will triumph in the works of thy hands. Thanks be " unto God for his unspeakable gift: And blessed " be he who hath come in the name of the Lord " to save us. Hosannah in the highest."

Ask your own hearts, *O Christians*, are you in any danger of remembering these things too much? And if you remember them at all, can you do it in any better method than that which infinite wisdom has prescribed?

Suppose a *Friend*, who had received a deadly wound in defending us from danger, should, when about to expire, present us with his picture, and recommend it to us with his dying breath, to keep it as a token and remembrance of his friendship and affection.—What would gratitude oblige us to do? Would we cast it into some by-corner out of sight? Would we suffer it to be sullied with dust? or buried under lumber, neglected and forgotten? Would we not rather hang it in our chief room? Would we not honour it, not only by care to preserve it from abuse, but by frequent looks, thereby to renew, and, if possible, to increase an affectionate remembrance how much we were indebted to our *departed Friend*?—

Can

Can we then pretend to honour our *Redeemer*, when we answer his care in providing and recommending his supper as a representative of his death, by a contrary care, in seeking pretences to lay it aside?

§ 3. The Lord's Supper is a visible badge of our Christian profession.—Nature has taught mankind, and God himself has confirmed it, that every religion should have some solemn rite whereby it may be known to the very eye, from other religions. Circumcision, the passover, &c. under the *Mosaic economy*, were all intended, (not excluding other ends) to be signs between God and his people, i. e. rites whereby they might be distinguished from idolaters: And therefore a terrible threatening was levelled against the neglecters of these rites, *that soul must be cut off from his people*: He has put off the badge of my people, and therefore must not share in their privileges. All this being highly rational, Christianity has its distinguishing rites, as well as *Judaism* had.

Prayer, thanksgiving, and such-like holy exercises, are common to almost all religions, and observed by the Jew, the Turk, and the Heathen as well as the Christian.—Baptism we receive in our infancy, and without our own consent; and therefore it cannot be the principal criterion of our Christian profession.—But by partaking of the Lord's Supper, we distinguish ourselves from all who despise the gospel of Christ, and testify, in the most public manner, our regard to a crucified Saviour, our concern to keep up the remembrance of his death, and our resolutions to adhere to him and his cause, while by others he is disregarded and set at naught.

Our Lord well knowing how loath we are to undertake any thing difficult, although for the sake of him who was our best benefactor, would not burden us with any number of troublesome ceremonies: And therefore he only appointed this one ordinance, by which we should openly declare ourselves on Christ's side, and proclaim to the world our grateful, affectionate sense of his unparalleled love. Ought we not then to be frequent in thus openly confessing Christ before men, while too many are ashamed of him and his words in this adulterous and perverse generation?

The Lord's Supper is also intended as a seal and confirmation of the fulness and freedom of the offers of grace in the everlasting gospel. For as really as the minister offers the bread and wine to the communicants, so really God the Father offers Christ, the bread of life, to every one of us for the nourishment of our souls.—And are there any, whose faith is so lively and vigorous, that they seldom need the help of this ordinance to strengthen and increase it?

Is not the Lord's Supper an ordinance, in which God is often pleased to vouchsafe special communion with himself, and his Son Jesus Christ? Does it not greatly tend, through the divine blessing, to strengthen the communion of the mystical body of Christ, and to warm and enlarge our affection to all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity? Does it not often prove meat indeed, and drink indeed to the fainting soul; a means to convey large measures of spiritual nourishment and growth in grace? Indeed suitable impressions of Christ's loving us, and giving himself for us a sacrifice and an offering to God, of a sweet smelling favour, are the great means by which holy dispositions

dispositions are begun, carried on, and perfected in the soul. And what can tend more to awaken a lively sense of these things, than beholding the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ? How many, who went to the Lord's table feeble and faint-hearted, have received such plenteous communications of light and life from the glorious head of influences, that they have been made to renew their strength, to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint?

Who is there amongst us, whose need of the Lord's Supper, for one or other of the above purposes, does not frequently return? Has then God provided for us so rich an entertainment? Does he allow us often to regale ourselves with it; yea, even invite us in the most warm and earnest manner? And, is it not a contempt of the goodness and condescension of God, and injuring our own spiritual interests, to neglect any opportunity of sitting down at the table of the Lord? "Our soul necessities, says the judicious Mr. Willison (*d*), do call for frequency in partaking: For we are oft ready to forget Christ, and therefore we oft need this ordinance to bring him to our remembrance. We are oft subject to spiritual deadness, weakness of faith, and decays of grace; and therefore have frequent need of this ordinance for strength and quickening. There is ground to fear, that the unfrequent celebration and participation of this blessed feast, which Christ hath prepared for us, is an evil that many in

(d) Sacramental Catechism, p. 86. and Preface, p. 9.

" this church are chargeable with, and for which  
" the Lord may plead a controversy with us.  
" How can we expect but he will depart from  
" us, when we stand at such a distance from  
" him, and come so seldom near him in the me-  
" thod he hath appointed? Can we look for the  
" smiles of Christ's countenance, when we live  
" so much in the neglect of his dying words? Is  
" it any wonder our hearts are so hard, when  
" we are so seldom applying the blood of Christ  
" for softening them; or that our graces be so  
" weak and withered, when we so little use the  
" means for strengthening and cherishing them?  
" Is not the frequent use of this ordinance, in  
" the way Christ hath appointed, an excellent  
" help to soften our hearts, renew our repen-  
" tance, strengthen our faith, inflame our love,  
" increase our thankfulness, animate our resolu-  
" tions against sin, and encourage us to holy  
" duties; and shall we willingly neglect it? It  
" is no wonder that we complain we miss what  
" we aim at and expect in this ordinance, when  
" we are so little sensible of former neglects. It  
" is a sad sign our receiving of the sacrament is  
" not right, when it leaves not in us earnest  
" breathings for the like opportunity. It is im-  
" possible for us to meet with Christ, and taste  
" of his sweetness and fulness in this ordinance,  
" and not long for another meeting." Thus far  
Mr. Willison. Many excellent reflections to the  
same purpose may be found in Charnock's *Works*,  
vol. II. p. 758,—768, which those who have the  
book would do well to peruse.

§ 4. The two preceding paragraphs abun-  
dantly prove, that if frequent communicating  
cannot be urged as absolutely necessary, it may  
safely

safely be recommended as highly expedient and beneficial. But, perhaps, upon inquiry we shall find in Scripture an express injunction of frequency; nay, of a precise degree of frequency in partaking of the Lord's Supper. For, that a prince should require a tribute to be paid him by every one of his subjects, and yet never express what sum should be paid, and at what time, is incredible. In like manner, I cannot easily bring myself to believe, that our Lord should require his church, to the end of the world, to eat bread, and drink wine in commemoration of his death, without specifying how often he would have it done.—The Jews, though they understood not the utmost signification of the *Paschal* rite, yet had full directions how often, and in what day they were to sacrifice and eat the Lamb. If then the word of God has assigned no precise time for partaking of the Lord's Supper, will it not follow, that the gospel is more obscure than the law; and that our Lord, when he took the vail from off Moses's face, covered with a thicker vail his own?

1 Cor. xi. 26. bids fair for containing such a special direction. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.* Dr. Bury observes (*e*), that the words, *this bread*, and *this cup*, must refer to some particular *bread and cup*, well known among the Jews, of which, as often as they eat and drank, they were bound to remember the sufferings of Christ: That accordingly (if we may credit Buxtorf and Leo Modena) it was usual at their feasts, for the master of the house, to take a loaf of bread, and

(e) Constant Communicant, p. 33.

bless and break it, and give to each person about the bigness of an olive; and if there were three or more eating together, to take a glass from off the table, and bless it also, and give to each of the guests a little of the wine in the glass.—If these remarks be well founded, it will follow, that if the Jews knew how often they had such festivals, that was direction sufficient how often to partake of the Lord's Supper.

But I mention this, rather as a subject of inquiry, than an hypothesis with which I am fully satisfied. There are many natural and obvious objections against it, which I do not think that ingenious writer has removed.

Dr. Wettenhall has offered another conjecture (*f*), that a certain determinate frequency in communicating is enjoined in these words, 1 Cor. xi. 25. *This do ye, as oft as ye drink, in remembrance of me.* He observes, that the particle *it* is not in the original, and is not supplied in the vulgar Latin, the Syriac, or any of the old versions. He then goes on to argue thus: “ If “ with our own, and most modern translations, “ we supply the particle *it*, and thereby under-“ stand the cup in the sacrament, this makes the “ command to signify just nothing. For, what “ sense is there in this form of speech, *Drink this* “ *cup, as oft as ye drink it?* Or, if we repeat the “ noun, instead of using the pronoun, *Drink this* “ *cup in remembrance of me, as often as ye drink this* “ *cup in remembrance of me.* We must therefore “ conclude, that the verb *tινετε*, stands here “ absolutely, or by itself. And probably it is “ used in the Hellenistical sense of the word for

(f) Due Frequency, &c. p. 6,—13.

“ feasting

“ feasting or banqueting, and so the text will  
“ run thus, *Do this in remembrance of me, as often*  
“ *as you feast, or, on all your holy feasts.* Now,  
“ for as much as every Lord’s Day was, even  
“ when this epistle was writ, already among the  
“ Christians a holy feast, therefore the com-  
“ mand will come to thus much, *Do this, or ce-*  
“ *lebrate my supper every Lord’s Day at least.* At  
“ *least,* I said, for other holy feasts they might  
“ have besides the Lord’s Day, but this most  
“ surely they all had. See 2 Pet. ii. 13. Jude  
“ ver. 12. compared with 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21.  
“ The plain meaning then of the command, *This*  
“ *do, as oft as ye drink, in remembrance of me,* is,  
“ I know that you, my disciples, will keep every  
“ first day of the week as a holy feast, with joy  
“ and gladness, in memory of my resurrection;  
“ and I intend so to order it. Now, see that  
“ every such day you remember my sufferings  
“ too, as well as my resurrection.”

These are the only passages that look like an injunction of any precise degree of frequency in partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Mr. Charnock has indeed cited one from the Old Testament for the same purpose. “ The practice, says he (g), “ of weekly communicating perhaps was ground-  
“ ed on Ezek. xlivi. 27. *And it shall be upon the*  
“ *eighth day, and so forward, the priest shall make*  
“ *your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-*  
“ *offerings, and I will accept you, saith the Lord.*  
“ A prophecy of gospel times, and the cessation  
“ of the ceremonial law of daily sacrifices: By  
“ burnt-offerings being meant the Lord’s Sup-

(g) Charnock’s Works, vol. II. p. 756.

“ per

" per, the remembrance of the great burnt-offering whereby our peace was made: And by " peace-offerings, prayer and thanksgiving, which " are called sacrifices, Heb. xiii. 15. And on " the Lord's Day, being the eighth day, following upon the seventh, the Jewish Sabbath." But I much doubt if the primitive Christians, fond as some of them were of allegorizing and mystical interpretations, ever carried their regard for these to the ridiculous height of building upon them a practice of such importance as weekly communicating. It is more probable their practice was founded on a New Testament precept, plain to them, tho' to us dark and obscure.

§ 5. But that obscurity will be no plea for our seldom communicating. For whatever difficulty there may be in finding an express precept, the *Apostolical Example*, which is as binding as a precept, is so clear and obvious, that he who runs may read it. And to me it seems something strange, that those who suppose the apostolical practice sufficient to change the *Sabbath* from that day on which *God*, in the *fourth Commandment*, had enjoined it to be kept, should pay so small regard to it in this instance, where it alters no command moral or positive, but serves to clear up a material circumstance in observing a precept which otherwise might seem indeterminate.—Let us therefore take a survey of such passages of Scripture as throw any light on this important subject.

§ 6. The sacrament was instituted by our Lord that night in which he was betrayed. From this circumstance, allow me to remark, that it may lawfully be dispensed on other days, as well as the Sabbath.

§ 7. Less

§ 7. Less than a week after, even the very day of our Lord's resurrection, being the first day of the week, and the *Christian Sabbath*, the Lord's Supper is again dispensed by Jesus himself (b). For that day, while two of the disciples are walking together to *Emmaus*, Jesus comes up with them, and takes occasion, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, to expound to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. But tho' this *heavenly preacher* speaks to them as never man spoke, still they were ignorant it was he: fond, however, of his company, they constrained him to abide with them, as the day was far spent. *And it came to pass*, says Luke (i), *as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them: and their eyes were opened, and they knew him.* Jesus could have discovered himself to them how and when he pleased. Sure then, he who does nothing in vain had some wise reason for chusing to do it in these, rather than in other circumstances. And what reason so probable, as to put a distinguishing respect on the sacrament of the supper, by making it the first means of manifesting himself to these disciples? Why else were the *disciples* so careful to report this circumstance? And why was the *evangelist* (j) so punctual to record, that they reported not only the thing, but the manner, *in what manner he was known to them by the breaking of the bread?* Must then our Lord's chusing this manner of manifesting himself to them preferably to all others; must the care of the *disciples* in reporting this manner; and must the care of the

(b) Luke xxiv. 13. compared with ver. 1.

(i) Luke xxiv. 30, 32. (j) Ibid. ver. 35.

*evangelist* in recording both the one and the other : must all this, I say, be imputed to mere chance ? Did they account this an *insignificant circumstance*, tho' they appear to lay *particular stress* upon it ? And tho' they seem to *honour* it, did they intend that we should pass it by without the *least regard* ? I know not how a rational answer can be given these questions by such who interpret the passage of common bread. Cartwright betakes himself to a strange shift. *It was not*, says he, *the breaking of bread itself*, *by which Jesus was known to his disciples*, *but something peculiar in his manner of asking a blessing before meat*. Is not this *commentary* a plainly contradicting the *text* ? And can that cause be a good one, which reduces so able a *critic* to so poor an evasion ?

The expressions used by *Luke* in this passage (*k.*) seem so parallel to his expressions when recording the original institution of the sacrament (*l.*), that I am persuaded few would have mistaken his meaning, had not the church of *Rome* misapplied this passage, to prove from the example of our *Lord*, that it is sufficient to distribute the *bread* in the sacrament without the *wine*.—But would it not have been easy to have confuted that sophism, by observing, that *eating of bread*, is a phrase for the whole of a feast, and therefore the mention of it does not exclude other ingredients of a feast. Besides, the *papists* themselves allow, that tho' the *bread* may be distributed without the *wine*, it is never to be *consecrated* apart. But here is no mention even of the consecration of the wine. If then the *evangelist's* silence is no proof that the wine was not conse-

(*k.*) Luke xxiv. ver. 30.

(*l.*) Ibid. xxii. 19.  
consecrated,

erated, it is as little proof that it was not distributed.

From this passage I remark, (1.) That the Lord's Supper was the first religious institution, in which our Lord, after his resurrection, manifested himself to his disciples. (2.) That this ordinance was twice dispensed by Jesus himself in the space of a week. (3.) The evangelist's remarking, that it was dispensed to the two disciples the first day of the week, seems an intimation, that our Lord intended it should be a principal part of the *Christian Sabbath*.

§ 8. Acts ii. 42. we are told of Peter's converts, that they continued *stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer*. The words *νοεῖν προσκαρπετεῖς*, which we render *continued stedfastly*, properly denote *constancy, or perseverance in an exercise, or waiting continually upon any thing*, as appears from the use of the same word, Acts i. 14. vi. 4. viii. 13. and x. 7. Rom. xiii. 12. and xiii. 6. And therefore whatever is meant by *breaking of bread*, it is plain they were as constant in that, as in attending on the apostle's doctrine, and public prayer. All then we have to inquire is, if the expression relates to the Lord's Supper, or to a common meal.

Dr. Whitby explains it of the latter, in his notes on this passage. "I see, says he, no necessity to think these words relate to the receiving of the sacrament, for the phrase of the 'breaking of bread' is used by the evangelists, Matth. xv. 36. and Mark viii. 19, 20. when they relate Christ's miraculous feeding the multitude."

But

But in answer to this, I would observe, (1.) That the argument does not require us to maintain, that *breaking of bread* must always relate to the sacrament. It is enough to our purpose, if the expression is capable of that sense, and if the scope of this passage makes it necessary here. (2.) That the phrase is capable of being understood of the sacrament, is universally allowed; and Dr. Whitby himself explains it of the sacrament, *Acts xx. 7, 11.* It is used by Luke eight times (*m*), and by Paul thrice (*n*); and in all these passages, except *Acts xxvii. 35.* it is almost certain it relates to the Lord's Supper: and even that passage is applied by Tertullian (*o*) to that ordinance. Ignatius, a writer in the apostolic times, uses the same phrase of *breaking of bread*, where he is plainly speaking of the Lord's Supper (*p*). (3.) The other exercises mentioned here, in conjunction with *breaking of bread*, are all of them religious exercises, attendance on the apostle's doctrine, fellowship, prayer. What then hath breaking of common bread to do in such company? It adds strength to this argument, that Justin Martyr (*q*) and Tertullian (*r*) mention the Lord's Supper, and the other exercises of which Luke here speaks, as stated exercises of the worshipping assemblies of christians. (4.) The Syriac version of the New Testament, which is the best and oldest extant, and probably was composed in the *apostolic* times, if not by the *apostles* themselves, as Mr. Jones has strongly shewn, in

(*m*) Luke xxii. 19. and xxiv. 30, 35. *Acts ii. 42, 46.*  
*Acts xx. 7, 11. and xxvii. 35.* (*n*) *1 Cor. x. 16. and xi. 24.* (*o*) *Tertul. de Orat. cap. xxiv.* (*p*) *Ad Ephes. cap. xx. p. 19.* (*q*) *Justin Martyr Apol. ii. p. 98.* (*r*) *Tertullian Apol. cap. xxxix.*

his excellent book on the canon; that version, I say, interprets breaking of bread, of the eucharist: and most of the fathers were of the same opinion (s).—From all this we may infer, that in the public assemblies of the primitive christians, breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ, was as stated an exercise as attending on the apostle's doctrine, joining in prayer together, or communicating to the necessities of their poor brethren.

§ 9. It is said of the same persons, Acts ii. 46. *And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread in a house, did participate the food with gladness and singleness of heart.*

Suppose we were to retain the common translation, *breaking of bread from house to house*, that would be no conclusive argument, that the Lord's supper is not intended: for the multitude of the faithful might render it inconvenient for all to partake of the sacrament in one house, and on that account, it might have been dispensed successively, in different houses.

But our translation is plainly faulty, and the cause of the mistake is easily traced out: *καθημερινος*, in the first clause of the verse, signifies *daily*, or *from day to day*: and hence it was imagined, *κατ' οικον* must signify, *in every house*, or *from house to house*: whereas it is evident, from the use of the preposition *κατα*, when applied to place, that it denotes some precise determinate place. See Luke viii. 39. x. 32, 33. xv. 14. and xxiii. 5. Acts ix. 42. xi. 1. xiii. 1. and xvi. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Col. iv. 15. Philem. ver. 2.

(s) Vide Suiceri Thes. tom. ii. p. 105. And Obs. Sacr. p. 130.

and never relates to more places than one, except the substantive to which it is joined be in the plural number, as Luke xiii. 22. Acts v. 15. viii. 1, 3. and xx. 20. or be connected with an adjective denoting universality, as Acts xv. 36. Accordingly Scaliger observes, that in an old Roman inscription, *ταπιας τον κατα πολιν*, does not signify *the treasurer of every town, or the treasurer from town to town*, but *the treasurer of the town*, viz. Rome. To confirm these remarks, I might observe, that neither the Arabic nor Syriac version renders *κατοικον* *from house to house, but only at home, or in a house.*

The temple being a house of prayer for all nations, that part of worship the disciples were at liberty to perform there, and accordingly *they continued daily with one accord in the temple*. But they could not dispense the sacrament there, without drawing upon themselves certain destruction. They were therefore under a necessity of holding private conventicles for that purpose, in places where they might be in less danger of disturbance.

Both Jews and Profelytes were careful to provide a *large upper room* in their houses for religious exercises. What more probable, than that the primitive christians having performed their daily devotions in the temple, at the hour of prayer, should then repair to a *large upper room* to partake of the Lord's supper, perhaps that very upper room in which our Lord instituted the sacrament, Mark xiv. 15, 22. and where the eleven continued, with Mary, in prayer and supplication, Acts i. 13, 14 (*t*). This is the more likely

(*t*) Vide Jos. Mede, in Operibus, p. 322 Gregor. in Obscr. Sacr. cap. iii. & Personium in Lectionibus ad Actus Apostolicos, p. 31.

from what we are told, Acts v. 42. *Daily in the temple and in a house,* (for so it should be rendered) *they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* In the temple, to convert infidels; in the private house, to strengthen and confirm believers.

From this passage, it is probable, that the church at Jerusalem received the Lord's Supper every Day.

§ 10. The next passage, to our purpose, is Acts xx. 7. *And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, &c.*

From this passage it is plain, (1.) That it was the custom of the first christians to keep the Lord's day holy, or as a day appointed for religious worship, and accordingly to hold their public solemn assemblies on that day. St. Paul did not call them together as he did the elders of the church, ver. 17. but the disciples were themselves *συνγένεια*, met in their assembly. The context informs, that Paul tarried at Troas seven days. Tho' he was hastening to Jerusalem, he did not, as he easily might have done, summon an *extraordinary assembly* on any of these days, but contented himself with more private labours; and chose rather to delay his journey till the return of the first day of the week, when he was sure of a *full assembly* of christians. (2.) The great design of their meeting was *to break bread*, i. e. to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This was with them a constant branch of the sanctification of the *sabbath*: and perhaps their thus remembering the death of Christ on that day, is none of the least causes of its being termed *the Lord's day.* It adds probability to this, that Chrysostom (*u*) terms

(u) Chrysost. Hom. v. de Resur.

the Sabbath *the day of bread*. Shall we then, on the Lord's day, omit an exercise from which it principally derives so honourable a name?

§ 11. That in all church meetings the Lord's Supper was dispensed, is further evident from 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21. The apostle had said a little before, that their meeting together was not for the better, but for the worse: this he proves from their behaving themselves so in these meetings, that they neither did nor could eat the Lord's Supper as became that holy institution. *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper*, i. e. it is not so to do it as that sacred action ought to be performed. Now, this argument evidently supposes, that whenever they assembled together, they came to eat the Lord's Supper; for otherwise their coming together, so as not to eat the Lord's Supper, would be no proof that their coming together was for the worse. Had the apostle charged the Corinthians, as guilty in some particular meetings in which the Lord's Supper was immediately concerned, we had then understood, that it was not a constant exercise in their worshipping assemblies: but on the contrary he charges them with profaning the Lord's supper in all their meetings: and what is termed *coming together*, ver. 17. *coming to the church*, ver. 18. *coming to one place*, ver. 19. is termed *coming together to eat*, ver. 33 (w.) Which shews, that whenever the chri-

(w) *Coming together to eat* is an expression as liable to be perverted by the Papists, for excluding the laity from the cup, as Luke xxiv. 30. and Acts ii. 42. But none, to ward off that silly argument, have ever said that the passage has no relation to the sacrament. Why then need they say so in these other instances?

rians met together in one place for religious exercises, eating of bread was a part of their employment.

## S E C T I O N II.

WE have, in the preceding section, demonstrated, from the sacred oracles, that, in the days of the apostles, dispensing the sacrament was as stated an exercise in the meetings of the faithful, as Prayer, hearing the word, or collecting for the supply of their needy brethren; and that accordingly in the church at Jerusalem, they had daily communions, and in every church communions at least once a week. Let us next view how this pattern has been regarded or slighted in after-ages, and with what success.

How the first ages of the church conducted themselves in this matter, is well known to all in the least conversant with church history: so that I need only refer such to a few of the many who have writ on this subject (x), and save myself the trouble of saying any thing about it. But, for the sake of my unlearned readers, I shall give a short abridgment of what may be found more at large in these writers:

The practice of those who lived in the very infancy of the church, must deserve peculiar regard. Their thorough acquaintance with the style in which the New Testament was writ, the

(x) Calvini Inst. lib. iv. cap. 17. § 44.—46. Buddei Inst. Theol. Dogm. lib. v. cap. 1. § 19. Dr. Cave's primitive Christianity, Part I. cap. 11. Sir Peter King on the church, Part II. chap. 7. § 6. Waterland on the eucharist, chap. xiv.

customs to which it alludes, and with many other peculiarities which are now almost buried in obscurity ; but especially their conversing with the apostles, or their immediate disciples, must give them great advantages for understanding the religion of Jesus. And as many of them sealed their doctrine with their blood, we cannot reasonably entertain the least suspicion, that they would dare knowingly to alter the least circumstance in the last, the dying command of their dear master.

§ 2. Pliny, in his epistle to the emperor Trajan (*b*), wrote about the year of Christ 110, which was only six years after the death of the evangelist St. John, acquaints the emperor, that he had found nothing to alledge against the christians, but their obstinacy in their superstition : and that it was their custom to meet together on a set day before it was light, and to sing a hymn to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by the sacrament, that they would commit no wickedness.

Justin Martyr, who wrote, A. D. 155. is another witness (*c*). On the day, says he, that is called Sunday, all the christians meet together, because that is the day of our Saviour's resurrection, and then we have read to us the writings of the prophets and apostles. This done, the president makes a speech, exhorting the people to practise what they have heard. Then we all join in prayer : then bread, wine, and water are brought forth, and the president having again

(*b*) Plin. ep. lib. 10. Ep. 97. Seque sacramento obstringere, &c.      (*c*) Justin Martyr, Apol. ii. p. 98.  
τῇ δὲ τοῦ Ηλίου λεγόμενην ημέρα, &c.

poured out prayers and praises to God, there is a distribution and communication made of the sacramental elements. Last of all, those that are willing and able contribute what they think fit for the relief of the indigent.—How exactly does this account of the worship of the primitive church tally with that of St. Luke, Acts ii. 42?

Tertullian, who lived about A. D. 200 (*d*), takes notice of some, who declined receiving the sacrament on the stationary days (Wednesdays and Fridays) for fear of breaking their fast; and blames them for this as a foolish scruple.—This passage not only proves that he thought it a duty incumbent on the faithful to communicate as often as possible, but that it was then a common practice, to communicate on other days as well as Sundays.

Minutius Felix, who flourished A. D. 230. speaks of the christians assembling to eat on a solemn day (*e*).

Cyprian (A. D. 250.) tells us, that *daily communions* were the common practice of his time (*f*). And Fortunatus, his cotemporary, made use of the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer as an argument for communicating daily.

Victorinus Petavionensis (A. D. 290.) tells us, that it was usual on the Lord's day to receive the sacrament (*g*).

(*d*) Tertullian de Orat. cap. xiv. p. 136. (*e*) Epu-las die Solenni coeunt. Min. Fel. p. 30. (*f*) Cyprian de Orat. Domin. p. 209, 210. ad. Bened. Eucharistiam quotidie ad cibum salutis accipimus, &c. (*g*) Vict. Petav. de Fabric. Mundi ap. Cave, p. 103. Die dominico cum gratiarum actione ad panem exeamus.

Basil, about the year 372, recommends communicating *every day*; and informs us, that it was the practice of the church of Caesarea, where he was, to celebrate the sacrament four times a week, viz. on Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday (*b*).

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who was cotemporary with Basil, or whoever is author of the tract, in his works, *de Sacramentis*, justly blames the infrequent use of the sacrament among the Greeks, where some communicated only once a year; and seems to intimate that *daily communions* were in use at Milan (*i*).

St. Hierom tells us, that they were likewise kept up in his time, (i. e. about the year 390.) in the churches of Spain, and at Rome (*j*).

Augustin (about the year 410.) tells us, that the eucharist was received by many on Saturday, as well as the Lord's day, *every week*; and by some even *daily* (*k*).

§ 3. These passages are more than sufficient to prove, that during the *first four centuries*, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was dispensed even oftner than once a week, and that it was a constant branch of the sanctification of the sabbath. Let us next shew how it came to be otherwise, and what was the consequence.

The learned Dr. Waterland observes, that during the *first three centuries*, we meet with no canons made to inforce frequent communion; scarce so much as exhortations to it, or any complaints of neglect in that article, which is an ar-

(*b*) Basil, ep. 289.      (*i*) Ambros. de sacram. lib. v. cap. 4. p. 449.      (*j*) Hieronym. ep. 52. ad Lucia.  
 (*k*) Augustin. ep. 118. ad Januar.

gument, that Christians in those times were not tardy in that respect, but rather forward and pressing, under a high notion of the privilege and comfort of partaking of the holy communion. (*1*). Tertullian, who lived in the close of the second century, observes, as I remarked in the former Paragraph, that there were some who scrupled to communicate Wednesdays and Fridays. But even that shews, they had no scruple at communicating every Lord's day.

But in the *fourth century*, defection from the primitive purity of the church began more and more to appear. The most probable cause, I can assign for this, is, that till then the religion of Christ being persecuted, few professed it who had not felt the power of it on their hearts. But soon after, Christianity becoming the established religion of the Roman empire, a greater number of hypocrites, from views of worldly interest, intermingled themselves with the true disciples of Christ: and in a century or two more, *this little leaven leavened the whole lump.*

Such nominal Christians could have no just sense of the use and benefit of the Lord's supper, and the obligations to frequent it. Having only a form of godliness, without the power of it, it is no wonder that the frequent return of religious exercises should be uneasy and disagreeable to them. Their example would soon be followed by lukewarm Christians, *who had fallen from their first love.*

About the year 324, it was decreed at a council held at Elibiris in Spain, that no offerings should be received from such as did not receive

(*1*) Waterland on the eucharist, chap. xiv.

the Lord's supper (*m*) : which shews, that some who called themselves Christians, were beginning to neglect the dying command of their professed Lord.

About the year 341, a council at Antioch decreed, that all who came to church and heard the scriptures read, but afterwards joined not in prayer and receiving the sacrament, should be cast out of the church, till such time as they gave public proof of their repentance (*n*).

Towards the close of the fourth century, men grew more and more cold and indifferent about the Lord's supper ; so that the eloquent Chrysostom complains, “ In vain stand we at the altar, “ none care to receive (*o*).” And in another place, after he had represented the danger of unworthy receiving, he adds, “ I speak not this , to deter you from coming, but from coming “ carelessly; for as there is danger in coming “ carelessly, so there is famine and death in the “ not partaking at all. This table is, as it were, “ the sinews of our soul, the girding up of the “ mind, the support of our confidence, our “ hope, our health, our light, our life (*p*). ”

The first council of Toledo, in the year 400, enacted, that those who were observed never to come to the communion, should be admonished ; and if they did not reform, obliged to submit to penance : and that such of the clergy as came not to the daily prayers and communion should be deposed, if they did not reform after admonition (*q*).

(*m*) Concil. Illiberit. can. xxviii.    (*n*) Concil. Antioch. can. ii.    (*o*) Chrysost. Hom. iii. in Ephes. (*p*) Chrysost. in 1 Cor. x. Hom. xxv.    (*q*) Concil. Tol. i. can. v. xiii.

From this decree it is plain, that tho' the sacrament was daily dispensed to such as were willing to receive, yet, that the neglect of that ordinance had begun to infect the clergy as well as the people. Yet hitherto this was a fault, with which only particular persons were chargeable, and warmly testified against, not only by the most eminent fathers, but by the public canons of the church.

But about the year 410, St. Augustine being consulted, whether it was best to communicate daily, or on such particular days when we were best prepared, gave this answer, “Neither he who communicates daily, nor he who does not, really dishonours the Lord’s body and blood, while both contend only in a different way, who shall do most honour to the blessed sacrament. For neither did Zaccheus and the centurion strive together, or one prefer himself before the other, when the former gladly received our Lord into his house, and the latter said, *I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.* Both did honour to our Saviour, tho’ in contrary ways, and both found mercy. So here, one out of reverence dares not partake every day; another from the same reverence dares not omit it a single day. All is well, so long as in either case the ordinance is not contemned (r).” It is probable this decision gave the first rise to the notion, that men might pay their reverence to the sacrament by turning their back upon it; and that our Lord’s command, *Do this in remembrance of me,* was as much honoured by forbearing his table as by fre-

(r) Augustin. ep. cxviii. ad Januar.

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quent

quenting it. And indeed it is strange, that even the name of St. Augustin could make such a notion blindly followed. However we must observe, as some excuse for that worthy *Father*, that the question proposed to him was, Shall a man communicate every day? But had the question been, Is communicating once or thrice a year sufficient? he, no doubt, would have answered, No; and recommended weekly communions, as *Gennadius* did, in the close of the same century, tho' he would give no decision as to daily communions (*s*). I might add, it is plain, from Socrates' and Sozomenes' church histories (*t*), that weekly communions were ~~generally~~ kept up till the ~~year~~ year 450. Socrates, however, tells us of two exceptions. "Whereas, says he, all churches through the world, on the Sabbath day, in every revolution of the week, celebrate the mysteries, they of Alexandria, and they of Rome, on a certain, antient tradition, have refused to do it." Probably the church of Rome was principal, that of Alexandria only accessory, in this peculiarity: For Alexandria drawing considerable sums of money from Rome, for the corn with which she furnished that city, might the easier be led to imitate the Roman customs: However others too soon followed their pattern. We see then *to what we owe the neglect of weekly communions, even to the pretended traditions of the church of Rome.*

At length communicating weekly, or even monthly, begins to appear burdensome. The greatest part received the sacrament only three

(*s*) *Gennadius inter August. op. tom. viii. app. p. 78.*  
Ed. Bened.      (*t*) *Socratis, lib. v. cap. 21. & Sozomen. lib. vii. cap. 49.*

times a year, and some not so often. This occasioned the council of Agde or Agatha in Languedoc, met in the year 506, to decree, that none should be esteemed good Christians who did not communicate at least at the *three* great festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday (*u*) ; and accordingly, from that time forward, those of the church of Rome esteemed themselves, in so far good enough Christians, if they communicated thrice a year, and that it was presumption to receive oftener (*v*). But in the Greek church, which was more distant from the fountain of corruption, it was usual to communicate weekly, even so low as the *seventh century*; and such as neglected *three Weeks* together were excommunicated (*w*). And in the *eighth Century*, Bede gave it as his opinion, that daily communions would be highly salutary to Christians \*. But that opinion not being very consistent with the doctrine of transubstantiation, which now began to be broached in the church, met with but small regard; so that in a short time it became the general practice to communicate only once a year, at Easter; and this the council of Trent seem to account sufficient (*x*).

It was then the church of Rome which introduced seldom communicating; for which, as for all their *Innovations*, they pretended an *antient Tradition*; and by which they alledged mens reverence for that ordinance would be heightened: And indeed so it was, till *Veneration* gradually in-

(*u*) Concil Agath. Can. xviii. (*v*) Bedae, ep. ad Egbert, p. 311. (*w*) Theodor. Penitent. p. 46.  
\* Vide Let. v. (*x*) Concil. Trid. Sess. 13. Can. 9.

creasing, at length produced *Adoration*, and the blasphemous absurdity of a *Wafer God*. A striking instance how dangerous it is for Christians to pretend to secure reverence to the institutions of their *Lord*, by methods different from those which he himself has appointed ; and that it is our only safety to adhere to the plan delivered us in the writings and practice of those who were under the infallible guidance of the *Spirit*, without turning aside to the right-hand or to the left. If we do otherwise, how prudent soever our measures may seem, and however pious our intentions may really be, we have in so far rejected the word of the *Lord*; and what wisdom can there be in us?

§ 4. The reader may possibly now expect an account what has been the practice of the purest reformed churches in this matter : But my small acquaintance with books, which can throw light on this inquiry, permits me to say but little on this head.

In Bohemia the holy supper is usually celebrated four times a year. They dispense it oftener when the need of the faithful requires it ; but thus often they enjoin it to be dispensed for the sake of uniformity (*y*).

A national synod of the Protestants in France, met at Charinton 1644, give it as their judgment, “ That though the Lord’s Supper is dispensed in their church only four times a year, greater frequency would be desirable, the reverence requisite at the Lord’s Table being preserved, that so Saints might increase in faith,

(*y*) Account of the church order and discipline in the unity of the brethren of Bohemia, chap. iii. § 4.

“ through

"through frequent partaking of the sacrament,  
"as the primitive church did (z)."

The Lutherans have a communion every Sunday and Holiday throughout the year (a). And though the number of communicants is often but small (b), yet it is usual among them to communicate three or four times a year (c).

The church of England enjoins, that "in every parish church and chapel, where sacraments are to be administered within this realm, the holy communion shall be ministered by the parson, vicar, or minister, so often, and at such times, as every parishioner may communicate at least thrice in the year (d)." It is well known, that many of the clergy in that church have recommended, and that many of the well-disposed among their laity practise, a much greater frequency.—This has given occasion to some, to asperse the Synod of Glasgow's overture, as paving the way to Episcopacy. But is it not abundantly consistent with the most rigid Presbyterian principles, to take a lesson from our sister church, where her practice approaches nearer the Scripture standard than ours? Is her observing an institution of Christ any reason for our neglecting it? The purest church on earth may learn something from churches less pure. And whatever some do, I shall never esteem it a mark of purity, to say to others, *Stand by, come not near me, for I am holier than thou.* The more we have

(z) La Discipline des Eglises Reformes de France, cap. xii. § 14. (a) Johnson's unbloody Sacrifice, Part ii. p. 151. (b) Calvoer de tit. ecl. t. i. p. 758. (c) Buddei Inst. Theol. Dogm. lib. v. cap. 1. § 19. (d) Canon xxi. of the Province of Canterbury.

of true religion, the more will we have of a humble, teachable disposition, and a willingness to be instructed, even by our weaker brethren. I wish 1 Cor. xii. 21. & seq. were more considered. Progress in reformation can never be expected, when the best things are rejected that other churches practise, under pretence of guarding against their corruptions. I cannot but observe, that Cartwright (*e*) and Calderwood (*f*) charged the church of England with too seldom communicating. So different was the opinion of these great and good men, from that which now prevails. And I am well informed, that a great part of those who were ejected for non-conformity in Charles II's time, dispensed the sacrament *monthly*. I have now in my custody, manuscript Memoirs of a private Christian, who lived in the time of the civil wars in England, who, I find, received the sacrament, with great profit, the *first Lord's Day* of every *month*, at the meeting where Mr. Ash, a member of the Westminster assembly, and Mr. Robrough, one of their scribes, were ministers: And that if any incident prevented the dispensing the sacrament the *first Sabbath* of the month, it was done, if possible, the *Sabbath next following* (*g*).

The churches in New England have no times universally stated for their celebration of the Eucharist. Some have it once in *four weeks*, some in *six*, some in *eight*: Some the *first Lord's Day* in every Kalendar month, and some the last. And

(*e*) Cartwright's Reply to Whitgift, p. 117.

(*f*) Calderwood's Altare Damascenum. (*g*) The manuscript is intitled, *The Growth of a Christian*, and was lent me by Mr. William Hog, merchant in Edinburgh.

the pastors reserve to themselves a liberty of altering the times as they judge fit upon emergencies. The pastor gives notice a week beforehand, that the Lord's Supper is to be dispensed. In most places there are held private meetings of Christians on some day of the week preparatory to the communion: And it is a frequent thing for the pastor to be present at some or other of them; or else, perhaps, to hold a public lecture (b).

From the form of dispensing the sacraments, composed by Calvin for the use of the church of Geneva (i), it appears, that the Lord's Day preceding, intimation was made to the people, that they might prepare for that holy ordinance; and that strangers, who inclined to communicate, might converse with the minister. On the Sacrament Day, the minister, at the end of the sermon, explained the design of that ordinance, and how it ought to be received: Or, if he judged it necessary, spent his whole sermon on that subject. How often in the year the sacrament was dispensed, is not there mentioned; but from Calvin's zeal to revive even weekly communicating, it is probable it was at least once a month: especially as Calvin approved the Book of common Order of the English church at Geneva, where Knox was minister; which Book takes notice, that the Lord's Supper was commonly used by them once a month, so oft as the congregation think expedient (k).

(b) Cotton Mather's Account of the Discipline in the Churches in New England, p. 95, 96. (i) Apud Calvini Tract. Theolog. p. 39, 40. (k) Book of common Order, &c. Preamble to chap. x.

I had almost forgot to take notice, that the Greek church celebrate the sacrament every Sunday, and solemn *Festival*, in their great churches, and that the laity are obliged to receive it *four times* a year (*m*).

§ 5. I now go on to represent the practice of our own church in her best times.

Before the reformation, in the year 1558, the few godly preachers that were in the kingdom, were forced by persecution (like the primitive Christians, Acts ii. 46.) to teach God's word, and administer the sacrament in the fields, or in private houses (*n*) : so that their situation did not admit of stated times for communicating.

The 29th of April 1560, the great council of Scotland, laid their orders upon six ministers, whereof Mr. John Knox was one, to commit to writing their judgment touching the reformation of religion. Upon this they drew up the first book of discipline, and presented it to the great council, May 20th, 1560. Mr. Knox warmly urged, that it should be publickly approved. And though he could not obtain this, yet, as private men, the whole body of the first *Reformers* signed it, the 17th January, 1561, acknowledging it to be good, and according to God's word, and promising to set it forward to the uttermost of their power. The general assemblies, July 30th, 1562, December 25th, 1562, and December 25th, 1563, seem to consider it as binding on the church.

Their opinion touching the times of dispensing the Lord's Supper, they give in these words (*o*),

(*m*) Smith's Account of the Greek Church.    (*n*) Mr. Wodlow's manuscript of Mr. Row's History, p. 5.

(*o*) First Book of Discipline, chap. xi. § 5. of Dunlop's edition.

“ Four times in the year we think sufficient to  
“ the administration of the Lord’s Table, which  
“ we desire to be distineted, that the supersti-  
“ tions of times may be avoided so far as may  
“ be; for your honours are not ignorant how  
“ superstitiously the people run to that action at  
“ Pasche, even as if that time gave virtue to the  
“ sacrament; and how the rest of the whole year  
“ they are careless and negligent, as if it apper-  
“ tained not unto them, but at that time only.  
“ We think therefore most expedient, that the  
“ first Sunday of March be appointed for one  
“ time to that service: the first Sunday of June  
“ for another; the first Sunday of September for  
“ the third; and the first Sunday of December  
“ for the fourth. We do not deny, but any se-  
“ veral kirk, for reasonable causes, may change  
“ the time, and may minister oftener; but we  
“ study to repress superstition.” An injunction  
follows to catechise, especially such whose know-  
ledge was suspected, before the administration of  
the sacrament. But there is not the least hint  
of week-day’s sermons before or after the com-  
munion.

At the fourth general assembly which was  
helden at Edinburgh, December 25th, 1562, and  
of which Mr. John Knox was moderator, it was  
concluded, “ That an uniform order should be  
“ kept in the administration of the sacraments,  
“ solemnization of marriage, and burial of the  
“ dead, according to the book of Geneva. Item,  
“ That the communion be ministred *four times* in  
“ the year within burrows, and *twice* in the year  
“ in the country parishes. The superintendents  
“ were appointed to confer with the Lords of  
“ Secret

" Secret Council aent the charges to be bestow-  
 " ed for the elements at the Lord's Supper (p)."  
 " It being reported in the general assembly holden  
 at Montrose, in March 1600, that some abstained  
 from the communion, under colour of deadly  
 feuds, and other light causes, it was ordained,  
 " That the presbyteries command every particu-  
 lar minister, within their bounds, to take up  
 " the names of all within their parish, that they  
 " may communicate every year once at least ;  
 " and thereafter summon them to compair be-  
 fore the presbyteries, to hear and see them-  
 selves ordained to communicate within three months  
 " after the charge (q)." From this it seems plain,  
 " that the sacrament was then dispensed once  
 " every three months ; and this is my only design  
 in mentioning it ; for in other respects it was  
 highly blame-worthy.

The general assembly met at Glasgow, 1638,  
 appointed a committee to consider what constitutions  
 should be revived or made of new. The  
 12th article of their report was " aient or-  
 der to be taken that the Lord's Supper be more  
 frequently administered, both in burgh and land-  
 ward, than it hath been these years bygone ;  
 it were expedient that the act at Edinburgh,  
 December 25th, 1562, be renewed, and some  
 course be taken for furnishing the elements,  
 where the minister of the parish hath allow-  
 ance only for once in the year (r)." This  
 shewes, that in the times betwixt 1600 and 1638,

(p) Mr. Wodrow's copy of Calderwood's manuscript History, vol. I. p. 792. See also Calderwood's printed History, p. 816. (q) Ibid. p. 837. (r) Acte of the general assembly from 1638 to 1649, p. 50.

Feldom communicating had again crept in. We all know these times were none of the best. However, even then there were some, and these the best friends of the *Presbyterian* interest, who dispensed the communion oftener than once a year. I need only mention the celebrated Mr. David Dickson, then at Irvin, who dispensed the communion twice in the year (s); and Mr. Robert Blair, who dispensed it four times in the year, at least after he went over to Bangor, in the county of Down in Ireland, where he was a chief instrument of the great revival of religion in that corner (t). If I had leisure to consult the printed or manuscript Lives of other eminent men in these times, I doubt not but many such instances could be given.—But to return; the good men

(s) *Christians from many other places of the country reported to the communions at Irvin twice in the year.* Account of Mr. Dickson in Livingstone's manuscript Account of the Ministers and Professors of his Time, p. 144. of Mr. Wodrow's copy.

(t) The work of the Lord began to prosper. Mr. Cunningham of Holywood helped us very much, and his little parish was a good example to ours. We often preached the one for the other. We agreed also among ourselves to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper eight days in the year, four in his, and four in mine. So that proficients in both did all these times communicate together. Mr. Blair's manuscript Account of his own Life, p. 71. of Mr. William Hog's copy. It is evident from that same manuscript, p. 94,—97. that the ministers in the bounds of the county of Down and Antrim, who were many of them Scotsmen, had, at least, one stranger assisting at their communions, and a sermon on the Saturday, and another on the Monday. But all this was in the church where the sacrament was dispensed. For Mr. Blair mentions it as something unusual, that by an unexpected crowd, he was obliged to preach in the court of a Castle.

concerned

concerned in the *Reformation* 1638, were sincerely desirous to promote greater frequency in remem-  
bering the dying love of Jesus. And accordingly the Assembly referred the above-mentioned article to the Committee's report to the consideration of Presbyteries; and declared that the charges should rather be paid out of that day's collection, than that the congregation want the more frequent use of the sacrament.

A pamphlet was printed at Edinburgh, 1641, intitled, *The Order and Discipline of the Church of Scotland*. The author only observes in the general, that the Lord's Supper is more frequently ministered in some congregations than in others, but he does not mention how often in any. He informs us, p. 21. "The Sabbath next, before  
"the communion shall be celebrated, public  
"warning thereof is made by the pastor, and of  
"the doctrine of preparation to be taught the  
"last day of the week, or at least towards the  
"end of the week, that the communicants may  
"be the better prepared by the use of the means  
"both in public and private." Here is no men-  
tion of any other minister's assisting the minister  
of the parish, nor of any *Fast-Days* or *Thank-  
giving-Days* regularly observed before and after the  
sacrament. On the contrary, it is said, p. 24.  
"The communion being thus celebrated in the  
"forenoon, the people meet again in the after-  
"noon, at which time the minister teacheth the  
"doctrine of thanksgiving, and closeth the public  
"and solemn worship of that day, from which  
"the people use to depart refreshed with the grace and  
"peace of God, and strengthened with new and  
"fresh resolutions to serve the Lord."

In the 14th Session of the Assembly met at Edinburgh 1645, of which Mr. Robert Douglass was Moderator, the opinion of the committee for keeping the greater uniformity in this Kirk was laid before them, and, after serious consideration, approved in all its articles, and ordained to be observed in all time hereafter. Among other things they enjoined, “ That there be no reading in the time of communicating, but the minister make a short exhortation at every Table; that thereafter there be Silence during the time of the communicants receiving, except only when the minister expresseth some few short sentences, suitable to the present condition of the communicants in their receiving, that they may be incited and quickened in their meditations in the action. That when the communion is to be celebrated in a parish, one Minister may be employed for assisting the minister of the parish, or, *at the most*, two. That there be one Sermon of preparation, delivered in the ordinary place of public worship, upon the day immediately preceding. That before the serving of the tables, there be only one sermon delivered to those who are to communicate, and that in the same Kirk there be one sermon of thanksgiving after the communion is ended. That the minister who cometh to assist, have a special care to provide his own parish, lest otherwise while he is about to minister comfort to others, his own flock be left destitute of preaching (u).”

(u) Acts of the General Assembly from 1638 to 1649, p. 267, 268.

It is now time to enquire, how the present rateness of communions, and the multitude of week-days sermons before and after them, was first introduced. And all I can do, is to mention two or three probable conjectures, as I know no certain account of that matter.

It began, says one, in the persecuting times, when many ministers under hiding, and the whole Presbyterians of a country, by stealth, got together. And when they met for this end, it may be once in several years, they knew not how often to preach; and the people had a boundless appetite to hear, so long as they could be subsisted and safe. But though the persecution they were under sufficiently excused their so seldom receiving the Lord's Supper, is it possible for us to vindicate our conduct, who live in quiet and peaceable times? It was necessity with them, and therefore not blame-worthy: It must be choice with us, and therefore criminal.

The author of *Dan in Beer-sheba*, gives the following account of the matter, from two books printed at London, 1657, (viz. *Uldericus Heridius sive de Statu Ecclesiae Scoticae*. And, *A true Representation of the Rise, Progress, and State of the Divisions in the Church of Scotland*,) both of them writ by public Resolutioners. The General Assembly say they, in the year 1645, did establish an order for preventing confusion in the celebration of the sacrament, with which the whole church were satisfied. Yet, since our divisions, our dissenting brethren have taken up a new and irregular way of dispensing the holy Supper, whereby they have turned it, either into a theatrical pomp, or into the Popish error of *opus operatum*. It is but seldom they dispense this ordinance. But when it comes

comes to be administrated in a church where any of them is minister, even they who are in the remotest parts of the kingdom, being warhed, flock to them. To those of their own party, of whatever parish, the heavenly bread is distributed, while most of their own parishioners are excluded. They have a great many ministers assisting them, six or seven, nay, sometimes double that number, whose congregations are generally left destitute of preaching that day. Every day of their meeting, viz. Saturday, the Lord's Day, and Monday, (*N. B. They had then no Fast-Days*), many of these ministers do preach successively one after another; so that three or four, or sometimes more, do preach at their *Preparation*, and as many on the Monday following. And on the Sabbath sometimes three or four preach before they go to the Action, besides those who preach to the multitude of the people, who cannot be contained in the church. Never before were there so many sermons in any church in so short a time. These practices, as they are a clear violation of the order unanimously established in the church, and do occasion great animosity and alienation of simple people against those ministers who will not imitate those irregular courses; so uninterested observers perceive a clear design in all this, to set up themselves as the only zealous and pious people, worthy to be trusted and followed in our public differences: Which if it be not an injury to that sacred ordinance, and an improving that, which should be a bond of unity and communion, to be a wedge to drive and fix a rent, let the judicious and sober judge.—Possibly some of these reflections were too severe, and dictated by Party Spirit:

Spirit ; yet there is ground to think they were not wholly without foundation.

It is not improbable, that the practice of the ministers of the counties of Down and Antrim, about 1626, many of whom afterwards came over to Scotland, might contribute to multiply sermons, particularly in the fields, before and after communions. But when the spirit is carrying on a remarkable work of conviction and conversion, as he then was in these counties, things may be fit, which at other times would be highly unseasonable (v).

After the *Revolution*, the Lord's Supper continued to be seldom administered ; sermons on the Fast-Day, Saturday, and Monday, were kept up, and many ministers employed to assist. The general assembly 1701, to remedy these things, recommended it to presbyteries, “ to take care, “ that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper be “ more frequently administered in their bounds ; “ and that the number of ministers to serve “ thereat be restricted, so that *neighbouring churches* “ be not thereby cast desolate on the Lord's “ Day (w).”

The sixth act of the assembly 1711, gives so strong a proof of the zeal of our church for frequent communicating, that I cannot but insert it intire. “ The general assembly considering, “ that, in some places, the sacrament of the “ Lord's Supper is administered only in the *Summer* “ season, where-through people are deprived “ of the benefit of that holy ordinance during the “ *rest of the Year*, do therefore recommend to

(v) See Letter 1, p. 279.  
1701.

(w) Act 19. Assem.

“ presby-

" presbyteries to do what they can to get it so ordered, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper may be administered in their bounds, thro' the several months of the year."

The general assembly 1712, " considering that the assemblies of this national church have, by several acts, appointed the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper in all the congregations of this church, and judging that the due observation of these acts will greatly tend to the glory of God, and edification of souls ; therefore did enjoin all presbyteries to inquire if the said acts be duly observed by all the brethren."

By the sixth act of the assembly 1724, act 6th, assembly 1711, is revived and renewed ; presbyteries are appointed to do all they can to have the Lord's Supper more frequently administered in their bounds, throughout the several months of the year ; and enjoined to take care, that on the Lord's Day on which the sacrament is to be administered in any congregation, the neighbouring congregations be supplied with sermons. Presbyteries are appointed to call their respective brethren in their bounds to an account as to the observance of this : And synods to call their respective presbyteries to an account as to what is enjoined them.

The presbytery of Edinburgh, by an act made the 27th of April 1720, did recommend the sacrament to be celebrated in their respective churches, at least the months after mentioned, viz. January in Canongate, February in North-Leith, March in all the churches of Edinburgh, April in Corstorphin, May in South-Leith and Kirk-Newton, June in West-Kirk and Curry, July in Collington and Ratho, and again in Canongate,

nongate, August in Libberton and Cramond, September again in West-Kirk, October in Duddinston, and again in all the churches of Edinburgh, and in November again in South-Leith ; and that any parish, which cannot conveniently keep their diets above-mentioned, do it in the month of December that year. And that communicants might have more time for private preparation, and that as few ministers as possible might be taken from their own parish work, and so their congregations left without sermon, whereby people, that do not communicate, come and incommodate communicants, and profane the Lord's Day by vaguing, idle discourse, and otherwise : They also agreed, that there be only two sermons on the Fast-day, one on Saturday, two on the Lord's Day, and one on Monday ; that neighbouring ministers should provide their churches with sermon, and exhort such as were not to communicate to keep their own parish churches ; and gave it as their opinion, that there should be no Church-yard sermons on such occasions (x). These alterations, inconsiderable as they were, occasioned a terrible outcry : And many elders and private Christians left their own ministers. But, in a short time, this heat subsided, and the best and greatest part of them saw that a separation on such grounds would be criminal. This was the more remarkable, as the number of sermons was greatly lessened, without increasing in any reasonable proportion the number of com-

(x) See Dan an Adder in the Path ; or, Considerations on the new Scheme of Communions in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, p. 6. And Dan in Beersheba ; or, the Idolatry of Communion Sermons, p. 11.

munions, which it is no wonder some should be uncharitable enough to ascribe to the laziness of ministers. Whereas the synod of Glasgow's overture is not liable to such a misrepresentation, the number of communions in every congregation being increased, and at the same time as many sermons on week-days, in the course of a year, as there are in our present way.

I shall only ask my reader, are our times better than the reformation and covenanting periods, when our church approached much nearer to the primitive simplicity in dispensing the Supper of the Lord? Has our church gained any thing, has practical religion been increased by the change of the old for our present way? Does it not deserve inquiry, if our neglect of frequently communicating, be not one cause, why *the love of many has waxed cold?*

### S E C T I O N III.

I Now proceed to consider some of the principal objections against frequent communicating. And,

I. It is alledged, that "the primitive Christians were so eminent in religion, and so well prepared for the sacrament, that weekly communions might, in their time, be highly expedient; but that in our degenerate times, the case is altered, and our frequently partaking, considering our low attainments in grace, would be highly dangerous."

But, if our attainments are so low, *is there not a cause?* And what cause more probable, than our seldom attendance on that ordinance, which

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our Lord intended as the principal means of keeping up a lively sense of his dying love? Besides, as Calvin well observes (*a*), the weaker our graces are, the greater is our need of frequent attendance on this ordinance, to strengthen and increase them. It ought also to be remembered, that even the primitive church had *spots in their feasts of charity*. St. Paul does not describe a christian deportment in the church meetings of the Corinthians: but he no where advises them to communicate seldom, but only enjoins them to do it in a more becoming manner.

§ 2. II. *The Jewish passover was celebrated only once a year; therefore, say some, the Lord's Supper, which comes in its place, should be dispensed no oftener.* To this I reply, in the words of Mr. Charnock (*b*), the passover indeed was annual. God fixed it to that time; but they had their daily sacrifices in the temple, which were types of Christ, and remembrancers to them of what was in time to be exhibited. We have no ordinance settled by Christ in commemoration of his death but this only.

§ 3. III. But the argument on which most stress is laid, is, that frequency will lessen the solemnity of the ordinance, and bring it into contempt. They argue thus, “ affections are “ wound up to a higher pitch by the novelty and “ rarity of any thing, whereas the common-“ ness of a thing, however excellent it be,

(*a*) *Quo enim majore imbecillitate premimur, eo majus ac frequentius in eo exerceri debemus, quod tum ad confirmandam fidem nostram, tum etiam ad sanctitatem vitae promovendam, nobis usui esse & potest & debet.* Calvin de coena Domini, in Tract. Theol. Genev. 1617. fol. p. 5.

(*b*) Charnock's works, vol. II. p. 756.

“ causes

“ causes them to flag and cool. Scarcity advan-  
“ ceth, plenty abateth, the value of every thing.  
“ Those acts of worship, which are frequently,  
“ are also slightly performed : and since we can-  
“ not preserve both, we had better part with  
“ frequency than reverence. For we shall more  
“ honour our Lord, by partaking of his sup-  
“ per more reverently, tho’ less frequently,  
“ than more frequently with less reverence. Ac-  
“ cordingly, how poor are the fruits of this or-  
“ dinance in the church of England, where it  
“ is so frequently dispensed ?”

To this I reply,

(1.) If frequent communicating is a duty, then danger of doing it with less advantage does not lessen our obligations to that duty. For whatever danger there is, God foresaw it, but yet did not see meet to guard against it, by enjoining us to communicate seldom. Shall we then pretend to be wiser than God? Have we found out better means for securing the honour of his institutions, than the means prescribed and practised by those who were under the infallible guidance of his spirit? Have not attempts of this kind proved the source of the worst corruptions in popery? Reason has no power to dispense with, or to derogate from the positive laws of God, on pretence of doing them a service. It is blasphemous presumption, tho’ it may put on a cloak of humility, to judge that a sufficient reason to hinder thee from frequent communicating, which our Lord did not judge a sufficient reason to hinder him from commanding it. *If thou thus judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.* Is there in the whole Bible, any express

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or

or tacit dispensation from frequent communicating, if we happen to imagine, that frequency will lessen our reverence? Disobedience to Christ is no part of the respect we owe to the Lord's table. *To obey is better than sacrifice.* Our Lord did not say, honour the sacrament, or dread it, or admire it, or adore it, but partake of it. We are not therefore at liberty to substitute any other mark of respect to this ordinance, in room of partaking of it. How singularly unfortunate is the command, *Do this in remembrance of me,* to be disobeyed from too much regard?

(2.) Conjecture is lighter than experience. Let us then see, whether the objection is verified or disproved by matter of fact. And here on the one side, the history of the primitive church, for more than three hundred years, proves, that constancy and reverence happily conspired together to God's glory and his churches benefit. But on the other hand, when succeeding ages attempted, by lessening the frequency to increase the reverence, the consequence was, that, by degrees, the very being of the ordinance was in danger of being lost, and a multitude of the most terrible mischiefs, and particularly a general decay of the power of godliness, overspread the *christian world.* Was there not more religion in Scotland, at the reformation and covenanting periods, when communions were more frequent? Since that ordinance began to be seldom dispensed amongst us, has religion been a gainer? Does not the gospel thrive as well, and are not communions as much honoured with the Redeemer's presence in New-England (where, in some places, the communion is dispensed once every month, and

in all at least once in the two months) as it does with us?—As to the church of England, I can prove from the writings of some of their divines, that tho' they absurdly enough read the communion service almost every sabbath and holiday, yet that, in most parish churches, it is only dispensed thrice a year, and even then the communicants few. Nay, as I remarked in the preceding section, so early as the time of Cartwright and Calderwood, infrequency in communicating was objected to the church of England. So that whatever contempt may be poured on the Lord's table by any in that church, will never prove the objection well grounded.

(3.) Does not the Bible speak strongly on the solemnity of prayer, and the danger of rashness in speaking to God? And does it not tell us, that the word when heard unworthily is *a favour of death unto death?* Shall we then pray seldom, and hear the word seldom, that we may do it with the greater solemnity; and so not expose ourselves to the danger of praying unworthily, and hearing unworthily? Would not this way of reasoning be fallacious, if applied to prayer, and hearing the word? And is it not equally so, when applied to the sacrament? The godly will not quit their reverence to the Lord's table upon any the greatest frequency, as appears by their uniting frequency and reverence in other religious institutions. And the shew of reverence the ungodly bring to it, is not worth the preserving: and much less is it worth the purchasing at so dear a rate, as the depriving saints of this ordinance.

(4.) Prayer, hearing the word, &c. are not less useful by reason of their frequency. Those who abound in them most, find most benefit in them. The same may be said of meditation, self-examination, and other religious exercises. Why then should it be supposed, that rareness in remembering Christ's death in the sacrament, should add to the effect of that ordinance?— Novelty, it must be owned, adds a force to every thing. Fulness brings cheapness on the very bread of life: yet who would infer from this, that it ought to be withheld till famine inhanse the price? Or that we ought to be seldom in preaching the great and heart-affecting truths of the gospel, lest by oftener insisting on them, they should affect less?

I shall conclude this head with the words of Mr. Charnock (c), “ To be frequent in communicating is agreeable to the nature of the ordinance, and necessary for the wants of a christian. By too much fasting we often lose our stomachs. Too much deferring does more hurt than frequent communicating. The often we carefully and believably communicate, the more disposed we shall be for it. If it be worthily received, it increaseth our reverence of God, and affection to him. And that is the best reverence of God which owneth his authority. Christ's death is to be every day fixed in our thoughts; and to help our weakness, there should be a frequent representation of it to our senses, in such a way as Christ has instituted, not as men may prescribe.”

(c) Charnock, ubi supra, and p. 747.

§ 4.

§ 4. IV. But it will still be urged, " That partaking of the Lord's Supper is the nearest approach we can make on earth to the great and dreadful God, and therefore requires such awe and reverence, and such degrees of solemn preparation, as would be utterly impossible, were that ordinance frequently dispensed."

I grant many pious and excellent divines have said this and a great deal more. But where does the Scripture say so? *To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because, in so far, there is no light in them.*

We ought never to approach God in any ordinance without a reverent, penitent, humble frame, and a heart broken for sin. But it would be a strange inference, that therefore there ought to be a fast-day, with three sermons, and a preparation day, with two sermons, before every time the sacrament is dispensed. These dispositions are necessary in every approach to God in other ordinances, and therefore if public fasts and preparations are necessary before the sacrament, they are necessary before them also. We seem to have made a distinction in this matter, beyond what we have warrant for in the word of God, as if this ordinance were placed at a greater distance from others, than it really is.

The vast preparations the people of the Jews were obliged to make before the promulgation of the law, are urged in support of this notion (d). And from the misapplication of such passages of scripture, many of the best of Christi-

(d) See Exod. xix, xx. chap.

ans approach their reconciled God and father with a slavish awe, like that of the Israelites, when approaching the mount that burned with fire ; or that of Peter, when he said to our Lord, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.* They sit down at the table of the Lord, with as great terror as the high priest entered the holiest of all on the day of atonement, when, for the very least accidental miscarriage or inadvertency, during his short stay there, he was in danger of being struck dead. Doubtless the seldom dispensing this ordinance has led many of the less judicious into such melancholy superstitious apprehensions, and raised such terrors in their mind, that they could not attend upon God in this institution without distraction, and thus were deprived of much of the comfort and benefit, which otherwise they would have reaped from it. Such I would intreat to consider the differences of the legal and evangelical dispensation, and of the spirit of bondage flowing from the one, and the spirit of adoption which suits the other, as represented to us, Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 25, 26. Heb. iv. 16. x. 19,—22. and xii. 18—24.

And here I cannot but take occasion to remark, that the day of atonement was the *only anniversary day of fasting, humiliation, and confession of sins which God enjoined the Israelites.* All their other annual holidays, except those which they themselves appointed, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, were days of joy and thanksgiving (e). If then the Jews had more thanksgivings than fasts, why should not the Christians ? Is not our cause of joy greater ?

(e) Universal history, vol. III. Octavo edition, p. 44.

§ 5. V. But we are told, that “ introducing frequent communions is an *innovation*, and “ that all innovations are dangerous.”—But it is an innovation in no other sense, than the doctrine of justification by faith was in the days of Luther. The truest and purest antiquity is on our side: whereas our present practice is a plain defection from the primitive pattern.

§ 6. VI. It is further argued, that “ the greatest part of well-disposed people in Scot- land are averse to this change.”

But in matters of doctrine and worship, we should take our direction only from the word of God, since the best and wisest of Men have erred, and may err; and it is natural to most people, to be prejudiced against any thing in religion, to which they have not been accustomed. In the present question, I have met with many of the most solid and experienced Christians, who have declared, that frequent communions in the way proposed, would be highly desirable. But they added, that the bulk of good people were so keen against it, that they thought it should not be attempted. Whereas, I have reason to think, that if good men who approve the overture, were but half as honest in telling their sentiments, and half as zealous to make proselytes, as those who disapprove it, in a very short time, most who have any relish for religion, would drop their opposition, and pray for its success. But generally those on the wrong side of a question, are most clamorous and noisy.

If great names were of any weight in such a debate, I could easily multiply authorities. But

I shall content myself with mentioning the few that follow.

Calvin handles this subject with great accuracy in his institutions, lib. iv. cap. 17. § 44, —46. He tells us it was then the practice, to receive the communion but once a year, and that in a formal, superficial manner (*f*). And after having urged frequent communicating from the design of the ordinance, and the practice of the apostolic and primitive church, he adds, “ And “ doubtless the custom of communicating only “ once a year, is the invention of the *devil*, who-“ ever was the instrument of introducing it.” And a little after. “ Our practice ought to be “ the very reverse. *Every week at least*, the “ Lord’s table should be spread before the as-“ sembly of Christians, and the promises upon “ which they should feed there opened up to “ them. None indeed should be forced to it, “ but all should be exhorted and encouraged (*g*).”

Mr. Baxter in his Christian Directory, part II. p. 101. having proposed the question, how often should the sacrament be now administered, that it neither grow into contempt nor strangeness? he thus answers it.

(*f*) Hæc abunde ostendunt, sacramentum non institutum ideo fuisse, ut semel quotannis aciperetur, idque perfunctorie, ut nunc communiter moris est. § 44.

(*g*) Et sane hæc consuetudo quæ semel quotannis communicare jubet, certissimum est Diaboli inventum, cuiuscunque tandem ministerio inventa fuerit. *Et paulo post.* Longe aliter factum oportuit. Singulis ad minimum heptadibus propænenda erat Christianorum cœtui mensa Domini, declarandæ promissiones, quæ nos in ea spiritu-liter pascerent. Nullus quidem necessitate cogendus, sed cohortandi omnes & stimulandi. § 46.

Ordi-

Ordinarily, in well disciplined churches, it should be still every Lord's day. For, (1.) We have no reason to prove, that the apostles example and appointment in this case was proper to those times, any more than that praise and thanksgiving daily is proper to them: and we may as well deny the obligation of other institutions or apostolical orders, as that. (2.) It is a part of the settled order for the Lord's day's worship, and omitting it, *maimeth and altereth the worship of the day*, and occasioneth the omission of the thanksgiving and praise, and lively commemorations of Christ, which should be then most performed; and so Christians, by use, grow habited to sadness, and a mourning melancholy religion, and grow unacquainted with much of the worship and spirit of the gospel. (3.) Hereby the Papists lamentable corruptions of this ordinance have grown up, even by an excess of reverence and fear, which seldom receiving doth increase, till they are come to worship bread as their God. (4.) By seldom communicating, men are seduced to think all proper communion of churches lieth in that sacrament, and to be more profanely bold in abusing many other parts of worship. (5.) There are better means, by teaching and discipline, to keep the sacrament from contempt, than the omitting or displacing of it. (6.) Every Lord's day is no oftener than Christians need it. (7.) The frequency will teach them to live prepared, and not only to make much ado once a month, or quarter, when the same work is neglected all the year beside; even as one that liveth in continual expectation of death, will live in continual preparation: when he that expecteth

eth it but in some grievous sickness, will then be frightened into some seeming preparations, which are not the habit of his soul, but laid by again when the disease is over.

But yet I must add, that in some undisciplined churches, and upon some occasions, it may be longer omitted, or seldom used. No duty is a duty at all times. And therefore extraordinary cases may raise such impediments, as may hinder us a long time from this, and many other privileges. But the ordinary faultiness of our imperfect hearts, that are apt to grow customary and dull, is no good reason why it should be seldom, any more than why other special duties of worship and church communion should be seldom. Read well the epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, and you will find that they were then as bad as the true Christians are now, and that even in the sacrament they were very culpable ; and yet Paul seeketh not to cure them by their seldom communicating. Thus far Mr. Baxter.

A worthy minister in the shire of Ayr in a letter to me, dated October 10th, argues thus,

" What a reproof is it to the church of Scotland, which boasts of a farther degree of reformation than even some other protestant churches, to fall so far, I had almost said, so scandalously short of them all, in commemorating the dying love of our blessed redeemer ? I know it is alledged, frequently communicating will lessen our reverence for the sacrament. But the contrary will, I presume, abundantly appear, by comparing those who do now communicate four times, and oftener, in the year, with those who never think of it

" above

" above once. And whatever may be the case  
" with respect to those who do not perform re-  
" ligious duties in a serious manner at all, yet  
" as to those who do, I believe it will be found,  
" that the more frequently real Christians are  
" exercised in them, whether praying, reading,  
" hearing, meditating, or communicating, they  
" are apt to acquire still higher degrees of per-  
" fection, in these useful exercises.

" As to abridging the number of sermons, &c.  
" besides the obvious necessity of this, in order  
" to the greater frequency of that ordinance, I  
" think it seems to be allowed, by most think-  
" ing people, that we have got into rather a  
" too mobish way, I may call it, of adminis-  
" tring that serious and solemn ordinance: I  
" dare say, that if a computation were to be  
" made, it would be found, that in some places  
" where there are not above 500 or 600 com-  
" municants, there will be at least upon the  
" Lord's day, near as many thousand people,  
" most of whom must be at least idle and irreve-  
" rent spectators, or rather disturbers; not only  
" crowding the passages, so as renders it next to  
" impossible for weak and infirm people to go  
" to and from the table with due composure, but  
" in a constant motion to and from ale-houses,  
" yards, and other places, where barrels are  
" kept for the entertainment of successive com-  
" panies, whose conversation generally gives of-  
" fence to every serious Christian, that acci-  
" dentally over-hears it."

Let none think, says Mr. Willison of Dundee,  
that frequency of the administration would ex-  
pose to contempt: for I am sure no worthy com-

municant will undervalue this ordinance because of a frequent repetition, but rather prize it the more. Did the primitive Christians bring it into contempt by partaking every Lord's day? Nay, was not their esteem of it much higher than these who dispense or receive it only once in two years? I wish the words of our *dying Saviour*, and the acts of our *general assembly*, relative to this matter, were more adverted to by one and all of us (b.)—And in another place, he thus answers the question, *Are we as much obliged to frequent communicating as the apostles and primitive Christians were?* Tho' they were in a much better frame for it, as having had more recent and warm impressions of the love and death of their redeemer constantly upon their spirits than we have; yet certainly we are under as strong obligations to frequent partaking as the first Christians were: for we have the same Lord and Saviour that they had, and are under the same obligations of love and gratitude to him. We have the same need of the application of Christ's blood, and a confirmed interest in his meritorious death, that they had; and consequently the same need of this memorial feast and sealing ordinance (i). And answering the question, *Is not frequency apt to breed formality in this duty?* he observes, (1.) The same thing may be alledged with respect to other duties, which yet is no good argument for the unfrequent practice of them. (2.) This fault is nowise chargeable upon the holy ordinance and institution of Christ,

(b) Willison's preface to his *Sacramental Catechism*, p. 94.

(i) *Sacramental Catechism*, p. 86.

but

but upon the corruption and carelessness of our hearts, which we ought diligently to watch and strive against; endeavouring, in Christ's strength, as often as we partake, so often to prepare for it. with all due care and solemnity (k).

Mr. Jonathan Edwards, of Northampton in New-England, in a book, intitled, *Some thoughts concerning the present revival of religion*, p. 214. of the Edinburgh edition, says, "It seems plain, by the scripture, that the primitive Christians were wont to celebrate this memorial of the sufferings of their dear Redeemer every Lord's day; and so, I believe, it will be again in the church of Christ, in days that are approaching."

§ 7. VII. It is alledged, increasing the frequency of communions, especially in the way proposed in the synod's overture, will occasion a new and formidable secession.

But, as Mr. Randal has well observed, in a paper referred to, Section IV. § 1. "Most who would leave a church on so frivolous a pretence, are in the secession already: and probably the present way of administering the sacrament may be one cause of it. Too nice a picking of ministers at these times, taught the people to despise some, whom now the best amongst us would willingly pull out of their graves, if they could. The Secession is now less formidable thro' their division." And the party of them who befriend the burgess oath, have, of late, expressed so much moderation and charity to the church of Scotland, in some of their

(k) *Sacramental Catechism*; p. 87.

printed papers (!), that I cannot bring myself to think they would condemn an overture so highly reasonable. When people see that it is not laziness, but a subjection to the authority of Christ, and regard to their edification, that make us desirous of more frequent communions, their prejudices will subside. And should it be otherwise, the affections of our people, valuable as they are, would be too dearly purchased, by disregard to the commands of Jesus.

#### S E C T I O N   IV.

I AM now to enquire, whether the synod's overture is not the most proper, and least exceptionable means to promote frequent communicating. I shall not be stiff in asserting this: but hitherto no better plan has been proposed, that I know of. I chuse, in this part of the subject, to deliver my sentiments in the words of two worthy ministers, who have thought much on the question.

The one is Mr. Willison of Dundee, preface to his Sacramental Catechism, p. 12. "I confess there is one thing amongst us, which is a great obstruction to the frequent celebration of this ordinance, viz. the great numbers of ministers and preachers now used on such occasions, which truly makes that solemn work a business of such outward toil and labour to the administrators, as discourages them fre-

(!) See Mr. Hutton's Speech, p. 55. Mr. Ralph Erskine's Review of Mr. Gib's Remarks, p. 37. and Synod Sermon, p. 32.

"quently

“ quently to undertake it. So that till some regulation be made in the aforesaid respect, I despair of seeing this holy ordinance dispensed so frequently amongst us as it ought to be.—  
“ In the days of old, there was less preaching at communions, but much power and life in them; but in our days there is much preaching, but little power. Not that I am against much preaching at these occasions, where there is an appetite among the hearers, and where plenty of ministers may be had, without laying the neighbouring congregations desolate, or proving any let to the frequency of this ordinance: but to make it a standing order, that there shall be so many preachings, whether there be an appetite or no, or whatever inconveniences should follow, I apprehend cannot be so easily justified. I acknowledge, about the time of our late happy revolution, when so much preaching at communions began to be a settled practice, there were such vehement desires among the people after the ordinances, and lively preaching of the word, that had been so scarce for so many years before, that it was necessary to gratify them, with much preaching, at these solemn occasions; but it is not to be expected, that these longings should always continue. In the primitive times of christianity, when the disciples hearts glowed with love to their lately crucified and ascended Redeemer, they had such burning desires after the ordinances, and preaching of the gospel, that the apostle Paul, at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Acts xx. 7, was encouraged to continue preaching with the people

“ people till midnight ; yet none ever pled, that  
“ the apostle’s practice, on that occasion, should  
“ be a standing rule for the church, in all time  
“ coming.”

The other is Mr. Randal of Inchture, in a written paper, where a plan much like that of our synod is proposed. And as that paper first engaged me to apply my thoughts to this important subject, I shall insert the greatest part of it.

“ Our present manner, says he, of partaking  
“ of the sacrament, by employing three working  
“ days in attendance on preaching, on every  
“ such occasion, renders the frequent partaking  
“ of that ordinance inconvenient, if not im-  
“ possible. For,

“ (1.) It is hard to bring our people to re-  
“ lish a frequent administration, if it must de-  
“ prive them of so many days of labour. And  
“ as industry and improvement increase, that  
“ difficulty will increase also ; especially, as some  
“ concerned in these things, have not so great  
“ a respect, as might be wished, for religious  
“ institutions. But if all were willing to at-  
“ tend, there are not many seasons where, in  
“ landward parishes, they can have leisure, espe-  
“ cially as the late improvement goes on, which  
“ much shortens the leisure time in summer.

“ (2.) Tho’ ministers may not speak it out,  
“ the expence, with which dispensing the sacra-  
“ ment frequently in our way would be attend-  
“ ed, will ever be an effectual stop to it.

“ (3.) Our present way is very inconvenient  
“ to every single minister. As almost all have  
“ the sacrament once a year, each must assist five  
“ or six neighbours ; and this hurries and hin-  
“ ders,

" ders, in a great measure, from that solemnity  
" of thought, which is only to be found in calm  
" retirement. In the parish where the sacra-  
" ment is dispensed, the minister's wife and fa-  
" mily must be all Marthas, and no time allow-  
" ed them to look after the better part.

" (4.) It is equally inconvenient to ministers  
" as a society. It often proves the source of  
" heart-burning, misunderstanding, party, and  
" faction amongst us. Tho' we have a regard  
" to a neighbour, yet the aversion of our parish  
" to him, sometimes not well founded too, tempts  
" us to purchase peace at home, by overlooking  
" him on such occasions: and this, proves a  
" wound that can scarcely be healed. But by  
" dispensing this ordinance in its primitive sim-  
" plicity, one occasion of distance and interfere-  
" rings will be removed, and brotherly love pro-  
" moted.—Sometimes jealousies, that such a  
" candidate for a vacant congregation would not  
" employ us, but popular men from a distance,  
" at his communions, occasions us, underhand  
" to oppose his settlement. Every new settle-  
" ment is half my own, says the neighbour:  
" half my peace and comfort depends upon it.  
" In the way now proposed, there could be no  
" room for such suspicions, and therefore it is  
" probable candor and friendship would more  
" prevail.

" (5.) In our present way, there can, in most  
" places, be no feast in the winter.

" If it be alledged, That this will prevent  
" peoples being edified as they now are by a di-  
" versity of gifts; I answer,

" (1.)

" (1.) We cannot expect the church should  
" be edified by neglecting the means the head of  
" the church has appointed for their edification,  
" (of which frequent remembering him in the  
" breaking of bread is one) and substituting,  
" in their room, means of our own devising.  
" For our Lord has no where prescribed a mul-  
" titude of sermons on such occasions, as a means  
" of our edification. Whereas, in receiving the  
" bread and wine, he has promised his special  
" presence.

" (2.) Four preparation days in the course of  
" a year, may procure as great a variety of gifts  
" as we now have. Besides, congregations may  
" and ought to fast often, in which way diver-  
" sity of gifts may be obtained, without neglec-  
" ting the dying command of Christ."

¶ 2. It was hinted to me, by a worthy and judicious friend, that communions might be had in our present way, if ministers were confined to one assistant; and if the minister of the parish, and that one assistant preached each of them three or four times: or if that should be reckoned bur-  
densome, week-days sermons might be got from probationers, or even from neighbouring min-  
isters, without asking their assistance, and thus throwing their churches vacant on the Lord's day.

If I can be convinced, that frequent communions may be had in this way, without danger of superstition, or hurt to society, I shall not be the first to decline such a plan. I own, it is free from some objections which startle people at our synod's overture: but, to me, it seems liable to greater difficulties of another kind.

(B.)

(1.) Would not this take up ministers as much, or more, from private preparation, as our present way, which I have heard many complain of on that account?

(2.) How few probationers are there in many corners? And could their assistance be more easily procured, how disagreeable would our employing of them be to some congregations?

(3.) Would it not be hard on poor people, and occasion the murmurs of others, that a parish, four times every year, should spend three entire working days, in the space of a week, in religious exercises? And would not this hardship appear greater to people, when there was little variety of gifts, only their own minister and one assistant?

(4.) Employing neighbouring ministers will not remove the difficulties mentioned in the last head.—But I own, tho' some may think it a paradox, it is my judgment, that neighbours ought never to be employed at sacraments. For there are some who will not, and others who dare not, employ their neighbours. And this being looked on as a piece of contempt, it is an unhappy source of division amongst us. Whereas, if it were the custom, always to employ people from a distance, every one, without giving umbrage to any of his brethren, would employ whom he pleased.

§ 3. It is objected, that a multitude of congregations will be thrown vacant by our overture: for if the sacrament be dispensed thro' a whole presbytery on the same day, sixteen or eighteen parishes in neighbouring presbyteries must be thrown vacant to supply them with assistants. But,

(1.) Tho'

(1.) Though many congregations will, no doubt, be thrown vacant, even by our overture; yet it will not be a whole country-side of contiguous congregations, as is the case at present; for the assistants will be got from different presbyteries, and some ministers will seek none.

(2.) In our present way, the same parish is often vacant five Sabbaths in the space of ten or twelve weeks: But if the overture succeed, this can scarce ever happen.

§ 4. It has been urged, that celebrating the sacrament four times in the year, will scarce be practicable in some parts of the Highlands, and therefore ought not to be bound upon them by an act: And that it would be highly inconvenient for a whole presbytery there to have the sacrament the same day, as they would find it hard to be supplied with assistants from neighbouring presbyteries, considering the great distance.—I believe, none will oppose altering or amending the overture in this respect, if once it were known what is the alteration which northern synods would judge most for their benefit.

§ 5. Some were of opinion, that abridging the number of sermons more gradually might perhaps prevent the opposition which the overture, in its present form, will undoubtedly meet with. To this I reply, in the words of a worthy Member of this Synod.

“ As to correcting these abuses gradually, it is  
 “ highly probable, that any such half or faint  
 “ attempt, would defeat its own design. Pusil-  
 “ lanimous assailants are easily beat back. The  
 “ abuses complained of are such, as we may  
 “ boldly avow our design to correct; Whereas,  
 “ if

“ if we conceal this design, or seem ashamed to  
“ profess it, this very conduct will harden such  
“ of our people as may be wedded to the present  
“ way, in their prejudices. Palliatives will look  
“ more like slothfulness in ourselves: Whereas,  
“ if we boldly avow the whole design at once,  
“ the abuses which we aim at will be allowed, I  
“ believe, to be indefensible, and the remedy  
“ proposed must be admitted to be the only cure:  
“ And, by that means, a conviction, I think,  
“ will be more easily fastened upon our people.  
“ Besides, as nobody proposes to stop at the first  
“ step, the very slowness of our procedure will  
“ encourage and occasion opposition, at least pro-  
“ tract and lengthen it out. Every new step may  
“ be expected to raise as great a clamour as the  
“ whole would do, which in the one case would  
“ be over at once, whereas in the other case  
“ it would be constantly fed by fresh springs.  
“ And the people having once declared them-  
“ selves, as this would involve them in a con-  
“ stant opposition to every further alteration,  
“ before they really could perceive the reason-  
“ ableness of the whole that was intended, so it  
“ would render it more unpopular in ministers,  
“ to be so often flying in the face of what is al-  
“ ready discovered to be so unpopular. What  
“ happened at the first establishment of the pre-  
“ sent *Version* of the *Psalms*, is an evidence what  
“ an advantage it is to accomplish any consider-  
“ able alteration all at once. It was extremely  
“ unpopular, as it may easily be imagined, any  
“ thing that had the appearance of altering the  
“ *Bible* would be. But as the thing was boldly  
“ begun over all Scotland on the same day, and  
“ ministers

"ministers were united among themselves, the noise made against it was very soon over."

§ 6. Some have observed, that providential incidents or a remarkable down-pouring of the Spirit, may make it reasonable to have week-days sermons, at a communion, on other days, as well as the Saturday; and that therefore it is a strange overture, that for four weeks of the year Christ may not be preached on a week-day, except once let it be never so convenient. I heartily agree, that though ten thousand general assemblies would make such an act, our obedience to it would be sinful. But, did the Presbyterians, by abolishing Christmas, &c. enjoin, that Christ should never be preached on these days? No doubt, that was far from their intention. A positive injunction, that there should be no sermons on the Thursday before, or the Monday after the communion, would be criminal. And so would a positive injunction, that there should be no sermon on the 30th of January, or the 25th of December. But it would not be unworthy of our church, to give it as her judgment, that the stated week-days sermons, which have been in use in Scotland before and after communions, have not a great deal more foundation in the word of God, than the anniversaries of the church of England.

Time will not allow me to consider other objections. The public may expect soon a more distinct defence of the synod's overture, by the Reverend Mr. Randal. I have perused, with pleasure, since part of this essay was sent to the press, and almost all of it composed, the first three sheets of his manuscript, in which are many new and

and ingenious proofs, that communicating as often as the primitive church did, is our duty (*m*).

May God send forth his light and his truth, to lead us, and guide us, and to bring us to his holy habitation. May we be willing meekly and humbly to receive the law from his mouth. And if our eye be thus single, our whole body shall be full of light.

(*m*) Though Mr. Randal handles the argument in a different method from me, and there are very few particulars in which we coincide, yet I think myself bound to acquaint the Public, they would not have been troubled with this hasty Essay, if I had seen Mr. Randal's papers before composing it; or if any thing of value had been published in support of the Synod's Overture, so timely, as that it could have been dispersed, before the meeting of Glasgow Presbytery, the third Wednesday of this month, (viz. January 1749.)

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## PREFACE to the *Edinburgh* Edition

O F

### A S P A S I O Vindicated.

MR HERVEY's writings have gained such a favourable reception among Christians of all denominations, that nothing farther need be said to recommend his DEFENCE of *Theron and Aspasio*, than to assure the public, that it contains the strongest internal marks of being genuine; and is equal, if not superior, to any of his controversial pieces published in his life-time.

It was printed in England a few months ago, but not published: so that, it is believed, not four copies of it have reached Scotland. The subject is deeply interesting: the manner in which it is managed, scriptural, judicious and animated. Mistakes there may be in the illustrations of certain passages of scripture, and possibly too in a few lesser doctrinal sentiments incidentally introduced. Though Mr HERVEY was a workman that needed not to be ashamed, he knew but in part, and prophesied but in part. He was too wise and good to arrogate to himself infallibility. Yet that is no reason why so useful and seasonable a performance should remain unknown.

Many religious societies have been lately erected in Edinburgh, under the direction of the Reverend Mr JOHN WESLEY; and most of their members are persons warmly attached to the doctrine, worship and discipline established in the church of Scotland.

Possibly the following sheets may convince some of them, that Mr Wesley is by no means so orthodox as they have hitherto imagined, in that doctrine of justification through the righteousness of CHRIST, which Luther esteemed the characteristic of a standing or falling church.

Mr Wesley has said, *Plain Account*, p. 4. "It is a point we chiefly insist upon, that orthodoxy, or right opinion, is at best but a very slender part of religion, if any part of it at all." But, though I am far from thinking contempt-

ibly of that gentleman's abilities, I much question if he will not find it a task too hard for them to prove, that ignorance or error are as friendly to virtue, as just sentiments; and that infinite wisdom has revealed a scheme of doctrines, which men who have the best advantages for understanding it may, with perfect innocence and entire safety, mistake or disbelieve.

Many sober-minded Arminians would be shocked at the virulent reflections he has cast on the Calvinist doctrines, of election, and the perseverance of the saints, in his pieces against Mr Whitefield and Dr Gill. But as the Publisher cannot at present command a sight of his other writings, he contents himself with a few extracts from his late *Preservative against unsettled notions*.

P. 148, 149. he asserts baptismal regeneration; or, that in baptism, a principle of grace is infused, which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit by long-continued wickedness.

P. 163,—170. he attempts to prove, that both the church and the civil magistrate have a power to decree religious ceremonies neither enjoined nor forbid in scripture; and may warrantably refuse to admit into their society, or to administer the Lord's supper, to such who in these matters, in their own nature indifferent, refuse to comply with their decrees.

P. 179. "Men are not elected till the day of their conversion to God." P. 180. "Predestination is God's fore-appointing obedient believers to salvation, not without, but according to his foreknowledge of all their works, from the foundation of the world."

P. 183. "Our obedience to CHRIST is the cause of his becoming the author of eternal salvation to us."

P. 184,—192. is spent in attempting to prove, that CHRIST died for all men; and that to say, he died for the elect as elect, is to say, that he lost his labour of love, and accomplished a solemn nothing; because the elect, as such, are not lost, nor captives, nor unjust, nor dead in trespasses and sins.

P. 192. "We believe, that in the moment Adam fell, he had no freedom of will left; but that GOD, when of his own free grace he gave the promise of a Saviour to him and

and his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation."

P. 237. "Whether it be lawful or not, (which itself may be disputed, being not so clear a point as some may imagine), it is by no means expedient for us to separate from the established church." (He speaks of the Church of England.)

For this he assigns twelve reasons. The 8th is, "Because, to form the plan of a new church would require infinite time and care, (which might be far more profitably bestowed), with much more wisdom, and greater depth and extensiveness of thought, than any of us are masters of."

How far this modest declaration corresponds with Mr Wesley's conduct, let others judge. Is it less difficult to form the plan of a church within a church, whose members in South Britain profess to belong to the Church of England, and those in North Britain to the Church of Scotland, while yet their most important spiritual concerns are inspected and governed by teachers, who, in that capacity, have no dependence on either of these churches, but are sent, continued, or removed, at the pleasure of Mr Wesley?

P. 241. "We look upon ourselves not as the authors or ringleaders of a particular sect or party, but as messengers of God to those who are Christians in name, but Heathens in heart and life, to call them back to that from which they are fallen, to real, genuine Christianity." — And a little after, "We look upon the Methodists not as any particular party, but as living witnesses in and to every party, of that Christianity which we preach."

If the Methodist teachers confined themselves to preaching, there might be some room for this plea: but hardly can this be pled, when they form bands or classes, where measures are followed offensive to many judicious Christians. Could they not be witnesses to Christianity, without that inquiry into one another's religious experiences, which Christ has no where enjoined, either as a moral duty, or a mean of grace?

P. 243. "Might it not be another, at least prudential rule, for every Methodist preacher not to frequent any dissenting meeting? If we do this, certainly our people will."

will." Now this is actually separating from the church. A little after, " If it be said, But at the church we are fed with chaff, whereas at the meeting we have wholesome food : we answer, 1. The prayers of the church are not chaff. 2. The Lord's supper is not chaff. Yea, 3. In almost all the sermons we hear there, we hear many great and important truths; and whoever has a spiritual discernment, may easily separate the chaff from the wheat therein. 4. How little is the case mended at the meeting ? Either the teachers are new-light men, denying the Lord that bought them, and overturning his gospel from the very foundations ; or they are predestinarians, and so preach predestination and final perseverance more or less. Now whatever this may be to them who were educated therein, yet to those of our brethren who have lately embraced it, repeated experience shews it is not wholesome food : rather to them it has the effect of deadly poison."

Perhaps some may ascribe it to an opposite prudential rule, calculated for the Edinburgh meridian, that Methodist preachers there seldom or never attend the qualified Episcopal meetings, but Presbyterian churches ; and churches too, in which the doctrines of predestination and the saints' perseverance are explicitly preached. But the last part of the paragraph just now transcribed, affords a different solution of that strange phaenomenon. Mr Wesley, by his profound skill in medicine, has found out, that poison may possibly prove harmless, where men have been early enough, and long enough accustomed to swallow it ; which fortunes to be the case with the good people of Scotland, as to the poisonous doctrines of Calvinism !

P. 244. " Nor is it expedient for any Methodist preacher to imitate the Dissenters in their manner of praying, either in his tone, in his language, or in the length of his prayer, which should not usually exceed four or five minutes : neither should we sing like them, in a slow drawling manner. We sing swift, both because it saves time, and because it tends to awake and enliven the soul." (I hope this will meet with due attention from some admirers of Mr Wesley, who scruple attending in churches where the swift method of singing, without reading, has been lately introduced.)

The *Preservative* is concluded, p. 245. by advising every Methodist

Methodist preacher carefully to read it, and his Serious Thoughts concerning perseverance and predestination, and to recommend and explain them to the Methodist societies, that they may be no more tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but may be settled in one mind and one judgment.

This advice, if known to the Methodist teachers in Edinburgh, has been so little regarded by them, that Mr Wesley's Preservative, and other controversial writings, are carefully secreted from the greatest part of the members of their societies, possibly from a prudent jealousy, lest they should spy somewhat in them that might abate their fondness to place themselves under his direction. Truth and honesty chuse to enter openly and undisguised. He that entereth not in by the door of a plain, simple declaration of his sentiments, but insinuateth himself into men's affections, by concealing or varnishing over his opinions, the same is a thief and a robber. Ministers of the gospel, by manifestation of the truth, should recommend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Walking in craftiness, handling the word of God deceitfully, keeping back from hearers what may be profitable, and, from affectation of popularity, shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, indicate more of the wisdom of the serpent, than of the harmlessnes of the dove; and, on the most candid supposition, proceed from a zeal for God not according to knowledge.—The publisher never received the least provocation from any of the Methodists; nay, has been treated by them with unmerited respect: many of them he esteems and loves for the truth's sake which is in them, and shall be with them for ever. Of the sincere piety of some of their teachers, nay even of their sound principles, he would think favourably. But when he reflects, that one is at the head of their societies, who has blended with some precious gospel-truths, a medley of Arminian, Antinomian, and enthusiastic errors, he thinks it high time to sound an alarm to all who would wish to transmit to posterity the pure faith once delivered to the saints, seriously to consider what the end of these things may probably be. Damnable heresies, superstitious rites, and the wildest fanaticism, may gradually gain ground;

and opinions and practices take place, the mention of which would shock many, it is hoped the greatest part of people, in this country, at present attached to Methodism. If men are once brought to believe, that right opinion is a slender part of religion, or no part of it at all, there is scarce any thing so foolish, or so wicked, which Satan may not prompt them to, by transforming himself into an angel of light.

Edinburgh, Jan. 7.

1765.

# D E F E N C E

O F T H E

## P R E F A C E to A S P A S I O V i n d i c a t e d ,

In answer to Mr KERSHAW's

## E A R N E S T A P P E A L .

I HAVE neither leisure nor inclination to criticise the pious reflections, and devout hymns, which make up so considerable a part of Mr Kershaw's *Ernest Appeal*. Though they scarcely glance at the argument of the preface, they are not ill suited to insinuate favourable sentiments of the Methodists, to swell the size of the Appeal, and to apologize for its price.

Mr K. has, on different occasions, tried his talent of torturing words to a sense that may afford him a specious handle for ridiculing the sentiments and reasonings of his opponents.

I had begun the preface with saying, "Mr HERVEY's writings have gained such a reception among Christians of all denominations, that nothing further need be said to recommend his defence of *Theron and Aspasio*, than to assure the public, that it contains the strongest internal marks of being genuine." Hence a handle is taken, *Appeal*, p. 35. to represent me as arguing, That because Mr Hervey's writings published in his lifetime gained a favourable reception, therefore his name in the front is a sufficient recommendation of a posthumous book, that confessedly got into the world as it were by stealth. — Is this a fair comment on the text? Would an unbiased reader consider my words, as importing, that the name of an author, without external or internal marks of authenticity, was any recommendation? They indeed import, that

the

the style and manner of *Apsasio vindicated*, prove, that Mr Hervey wrot it. That evidence, I must be excused for thinking, remains still unshaken, after all the story of Mr Cudworth. If that gentleman's heart was profligate enough to prompt him to an infamous forgery, of which however there is no proof: yet hardly was his genius adequate for a task, in which the most artful and cautious impostors have generally failed; counterfeiting, I mean, throughout a work of considerable length, the most striking and characteristical indications of authenticity.

Mr K. insists, p. 37. & seq. that I confess mistakes in *Apsasio vindicated*, both in doctrinal sentiments and illustrations of scripture, and yet pronounce them equal, if not superior, to any of his controversial writings published in his lifetime: whence he argues, I must think there are such mistakes in these other writings.

Had Mr K. read the preface leisurely, and with attention, he would have observed I only say, "mistakes there may be, &c.," and found my saying so, simply on this, that Mr Hervey was not infallible. This is no more a confession of actual mistakes in *Apsasio vindicated*, than acknowledging myself liable to err, would be a confession, that some of my present opinions are actually false.

Though I had confessed what Mr K. alledges, his consequence would not hold. I think some of the works of Chemnitius, Gerhard, Bengelius, and other Lutheran divines, superior in value to certain modern Calvinist pieces; in which last there are, notwithstanding, fewer errors: and it is as consistent with equalling, or even preferring *Apsasio vindicated*, to Mr Hervey's other works, to suppose lesser mistakes in the first, from which the last are free.

Far less would it follow, from my acknowledging mistakes in all Mr Hervey's writings, that I looked upon them as unprofitable, and not calculated to do good. (See *Appeal*, p. 37.) If no books in which there are any mistakes are calculated to do good, I am afraid no bulky book in the world, except the Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New in Greek, would deserve a reading; nay, nor even these, unless we knew they were exactly printed from copies in which there was no error. Does not Mr Kershaw think, that not a few mistakes in *Theron* and *Apsasio* have been

been pointed out by Mr Wesley, in his letter to the author? and yet does he not say, p. 38. "It is certain Mr Hervey's writings have been weapons, by which God has done great things, in instructing the foolish, convincing the erroneous, &c.?" Mr Wesley has recommended a number of books at the end of his *Reflections* on the conduct of human life. I suppose he will readily acknowledge, that there may be mistakes even in his own tracts and Christian library; and that there are mistakes in Epictetus, and Marcus Antoninus, not to say Terence, Horace, or Martial. All of them, however, appear in the list; which, it is evident from the design of the book to which they are annexed, they would not have done, if he had not looked upon them as profitable, and calculated to do good. Is candor confined to Methodists! and are all else such bigots, that they cannot esteem a book useful, in which they see some small mistakes!

What occasion then has the preface given for the exclamation, (*Appeal*, p. 37.) "Where is the glory of Mr Hervey himself, if all his writings are so full of mistakes? His remembrance is dear to many. But if this be the case, as it appears from the above, we may truly say, in mournful accents, Where is his glory?" Is saying that there are mistakes in all Mr Hervey's writings, (had that indeed been said), the same thing with saying, they are full of mistakes? Where were Mr Kershaw's eyes, if he fancied I said so? and where was his honesty, if he did not?

What is said, *Appeal*, p. 46. has more appearance both of fairness and of argument: "Can that be scriptural, which mistakes, 1. Scripture illustrations (I should rather have said proofs)? 2. Doctrinal sentiments, allowing they were the lesser sort only, and but few in number likewise? By the same charitable allowance, however, I hope soon to make it appear, that the editor must either allow Mr Wesley to be orthodox, or himself possibly a little too partial." If Mr Wesley's mistakes were only in a few illustrations of certain passages of scripture, (not scripture illustrations, which was not the phrase in the preface), or in lesser doctrinal sentiments, I acknowledge, his writings might be in the main orthodox and

and useful ; though, at the same time, guarding against these lesser errors might be no useless employment for one who had sufficient leisure : but if his mistakes are numerous, and some of them capital ones too, the recommending Mr Hervey's writings will be no reason for recommending him. How numerous Mr Wesley's mistakes are, I have shown in the preface, and will further show in the sequel of this defence. How important some of them are, e. g. Justification through our own faith and obedience, and the sinless perfection of all born of God, I need not say.

But Mr Kershaw would have the public believe, that Mr Wesley cannot be justly charged with the first of these errors. He tells us, p. 41. Mr Wesley uniformly asserts, and that without wavering since the 1738, that no man is justified in the sight of God by any works done by him of any kind, either before or after believing, nor by sanctifying grace inherent in him ; but by the righteousness of Christ alone, (including both what he did and suffered), imputed to us, and received by a true and lively faith ; and that faith itself does not justify as it is a work, but as it apprehends Christ ; and that if Mr Wesley has styled faith a condition of justification, he has told us, in the first volume of his sermons, that all he means is, that a man cannot be justified without it. From p. 51.—74. he attempts to show, that Mr Wesley has uniformly explained the doctrine of justification in this manner. Many of the expressions to which he appeals might have been honestly used by one who believed not the imputation of Christ's active obedience, some of them I think could not ; particularly what is cited, p. 58. from Wesley's Principles of a Methodist : “ Christ is now the righteousness of every one that truly believes in him ; he for them paid the ransom by his death ; he for them fulfilled the law in his life : so that now in him and by him every believer may be called a fulfiller of the law.” And, p. 60. from his notes on the epistle to the Romans, “ We conclude then, that a man is justified by faith ; and even by this, not as it is a work, but as it apprehends Christ.”

But though these and other passages prove that Mr Wesley has asserted the scripture doctrine of justification through

through the righteousness of Christ, in writings both of an older and later date; what same is due to an attestation, that he has uniformly, and without wavering, asserted that doctrine? I shall say nothing of his letter to Mr Hervey, as it has been so often reprinted: but I would remind Mr Kershaw, that in the year 1745, Mr Wesley published an extract of Mr Baxter on justification. There an attempt is made, p. 3, 4, 5. to confute the opinion that Christ did as properly obey as suffer in our stead; and that his active obedience is imputed to us for the making of us righteous, and giving us a title to the kingdom. It is argued, p. 24,—26. that it is faith in a proper sense that is said to justify, and not Christ's righteousness only, which it receives: and that faith properly justifies, not as apprehending Christ and his righteousness, but as fulfilling the condition of a new covenant. And, to crown all, it is maintained, p. 26,—31. that repentance, forgiveness of injuries, new obedience, &c. are conditions of pardon and eternal life: and that therefore, when it is said that faith only justifies, the meaning is, that faith justifies, as implying all other parts of the condition of the new covenant, and as the great master-duty of the gospel, to which all the rest are reducible.

This year, 1765, Mr Wesley has published a large treatise on justification, extracted from Mr John Goodwin, as containing the real scripture-doctrine relating to that article. The great design of that treatise is to prove, that the act ~~of~~<sup>the</sup> faith is imputed to men for righteousness; and that the active obedience of Christ, or his fulfilling the moral law, was never intended by God to be that righteousness wherewith we are justified. Mr Wesley tells us, Mr Goodwin was a firm and zealous Calvinist at the time he wrote that book. If he professed himself so, (in which I hope Mr Wesley is wrong informed), his integrity and orthodoxy were much of a piece. One thing is certain, there are few books in English, in which the Popish and Arminian objections against the imputation of Christ's active obedience have been more keenly urged. If, then, Mr Kershaw would vindicate his assertion of Mr Wesley's uniform orthodoxy, he must maintain that the following propositions are consistent: We are justified by the righteousness

teousness of Christ alone, including both what he did and suffered. Christ's fulfilling the moral law, or active obedience, was never intended to be that righteousness wherewith we are justified.—Faith does not justify as it is a work, but as it apprehends Christ. Faith properly justifies, not as apprehending Christ and his righteousness, but as an act of obedience to a law, or as fulfilling the condition of a new covenant.—No man is justified in the sight of God, by any works done by him either before or after believing, nor by sanctifying grace inherent in him. Repentance, forgiveness of injuries, new obedience, &c. are conditions of pardon and eternal life: and faith justifies as the great master-duty of the gospel, to which all the rest are reducible.—When Mr Kershaw has reconciled these glaring contradictions, he bids fair for gratifying the sceptics with a proof, that darkness and light, falsehood and truth, absurdity and evidence, are one and the same thing. “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” Whether the doctrine of justification, as asserted in the confessions of the Lutheran and Reformed churches, or as explained by Arminian divines, is preferable, has indeed been disputed. But his understanding must be of a monstrous make, who can digest both as equally wholesome.

Mr Wesley, in a late advertisement about Goodwin on justification, has apologised for himself in a way very different from Mr Kershaw. He tells us, as the expression, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ for justification, was capable of a sound sense, his brother and he, not only did not oppose it, but sometimes even used it themselves, especially in verse, where allowance is made for phrases not exactly proper. But they soon found the inconvenience of those expressions. Antinomianism came in with a full tide. They were persuaded that those phrases were not only unscriptural, but dangerous in the highest degree, tending to destroy the very end of our Lord's coming into the world, namely, to save his people from their sins; yea, in fact, made thousands easy though not thus saved. Yet the fear of grieving any who were upright of heart, and yet wedded to those modes of expression,

expression, kept him for many years from speaking explicitly on that head. Nor indeed had he leisure to speak so largely as was necessary to obviate many difficulties. But Dr Goodwin has done it to his hand, and confirmed whatever he advances by scripture and reason.

Let me briefly review this narrative. The imputation of the righteousness of Christ for justification, is an expression generally used to signify the imputation both of his active and passive obedience. If, therefore, he uses the expression, who denies the first, his trumpet gives an uncertain sound: I might have said, a deceitful sound; especially when other phrases are used along with this, which seem to imply the common doctrine; e. g.

*Jesus hath lived, hath died for me.*

*Jesus! thy blood and righteousness*

*My beauty are, my glorious dress:*

where the blood and righteousness of Christ seem to be distinguished.

But whatever apology may be made for Mr Wesley's using these hymns twenty years ago, what apology can be made for his republishing them, after the danger of using such phrases was discerned? what apology for their being daily sung by Mr Wesley, and his teachers, societies, and congregations throughout Britain and Ireland? Mr Wesley says of a collection of hymns printed at Edinburgh 1763, where the above cited verses appear, "There is not an hymn, not one verse inserted here, but what relates to the common salvation." From all this I conclude, and Mr Kershaw has done so before me, p. 53. that these hymns contain Mr Wesley's present sentiments.

But it was not only in verse, where, it is pled, allowance may be made for phrases not exactly proper, that Mr Wesley has used these phrases. He has used those, nay other phrases more explicit, on occasions where the greatest precision was requisite. One would expect, if any where, to find his opinions clearly stated in his *Principles of a Methodist*, of which I have by me the third edition, published at London, 1756. Yet there he says, p. 6, 7. "Christ " therefore is now the righteousness of all them that truly

"believe in him. He for them paid the ransom by his death : he for them fulfilled the law in his life. So that now in him, and by him, every believer may be called a fulfiller of the law." Was it charity to the souls of men, to suffer assertions to remain in such a book, which, before that edition, he had observed, made thousands easy, though not saved from their sins? Was fear of grieving good men, a reason for ambiguous and ensnaring expressions, or even for silence, when from the former use of such expressions, bad men (as Mr Wesley tells us in the above-cited advertisement) blessed themselves in their unrighteousness, congratulating themselves upon their being the only men, who understand, enjoy, and defend the pure gospel?

From that advertisement, however, it appears, that Dr Goodwin's treatise on justification is to be considered as the most full and explicit account of Mr Wesley's present sentiments of that article. If it exhibits a different view of them from what is exhibited in the hymns, and other writings, which also contain his present sentiments, Arminians may take the first, and Calvinists the last, and both may admire the sagacity of the teacher, who has shown the same marks of regard to two systems so diametrically opposite.

I make no observations on what Mr Kershaw says about Cudworth's sentiments, p. 44. et seq. I have small acquaintance with his works. If he denies the necessity of inherent holiness derived from Christ, he dangerously errs. But that error cannot justly be charged upon Mr Hervey, and other asserters of the imputation of Christ's active obedience, though their subject has not led them to insist at length on the necessity of real personal holiness.

I know not what societies Mr Kershaw aims at in what he says, *Appeal*, p. 49, "They who cause discord and division are from the devil ; but the Methodists do not cause discord and division, &c. ergo. I should not have took notice of this, if it had not been to express my sorrow, that many of those called *religious societies*, that have been set up in this kingdom for many years before, seem not so warmly attached to the worship and discipline established in the church of Scotland. How do

" you

"you know, but God may have sent us to help to heal  
"your breaches?" If this is levelled at the religious so-  
cieties of the Secession, or Presbytery of Relief, great injus-  
tice is done them. Those of the Secession have uniformly  
professed a warm attachment to the doctrine, worship, and  
discipline of the church of Scotland, though they think it  
their duty to separate from her present judicatories. Those  
of the Presbytery of Relief often occasionally communicate  
with ministers of the church of Scotland: and if they are  
under the ordinary inspection of pastors not in full com-  
munion with her, this proceeds, partly, from laudable at-  
tachments to one who did not separate from her, but was  
deposed for refusing to do what he thought inconsistent  
with his ordination-vows: partly, from scruples to submit  
to the ministry of presentees violently intruded upon them.  
Both these breaches I sincerely lament, as depriving the  
church of Scotland of many who would be an honour and  
blessing to her: though I rejoice that, so far as I can learn,  
the most important truths of the gospel are taught in their  
religious assemblies. But hardly do I think these breaches  
are likely to be healed by Mr Wesley's system gaining  
ground among members of the church of Scotland, as the  
principles of these separatists are no way favourable to that  
system.

Mr Kershaw proceeds, *Appeal*, p 74. to consider my  
other objections. Speaking of the extracts upon which  
they are founded, he says, "What sort of an extract we  
"have here, those who have seen the whole mass may  
"judge for themselves." Something very ugly is here in-  
sinuated, which he does not chuse to speak out. I did in  
the preface, as I do in this defence, sometimes give an ac-  
count in a few lines of the intention of many pages: but  
if I had represented that intention falsely, Mr Kershaw's  
zeal for Mr Wesley would have led him to detect me.

Mr Kershaw has endeavoured to wrap in obscurity Mr  
Wesley's account of predestination, and to lead away the  
reader from the only question in hand, if his doctrine cor-  
responds with that of the church of Scotland on this head,  
and therefore if those warmly attached to the doctrine of  
the church of Scotland act wisely in encouraging Method-  
ism.

What are indeed Mr Wesley's sentiments, learn from his own words.

*Dialogue between a predestinarian and his friend*, 2d edition, Lond. 1741. p. 12. "Predestinarian. What then do you mean by the words *election* and *reprobation*? Friend. I mean this. 1. God did decree from the beginning to elect or chuse in Christ all that should believe to salvation; and to reprobate all who should obstinately and finally continue in unbelief. Predestinarian. What then do you think of absolute unconditional election and reprobation? Friend. I think it cannot be found in holy writ, and that it is a plant which bears dismal fruit; an instance of which we have in *Calvin* himself, who confesses that he procured the burning to death of *Michael Servetus*, a wise and holy man, purely for differing from him in opinion in matters of religion \*."

*Scripture-doctrine concerning predestination, &c.* Lond. 1741. p. 4. "As Christ was called the Lamb slain from the

\* However unjustifiable the burning Servetus may be, predestination was no more accessory to his death than Methodism: He had attacked the doctrine of the Trinity in a most insolent and outrageous manner: representing it as an impossible monster, an imposture of the devil, a three-headed Cerberus: and asserting that all Trinitarians were truly Atheists. It was therefore no wonder if this provoked the utmost severity, in an age, when the principles of toleration were little understood, and Protestants as well as Papists agreed that heretics ought to be put to death. Urbanus Regius, a Lutheran divine, published a book A. D. 1558, to justify such severity. Nay, even so late as A. D. 1687, one Peter Gunther was put to death at Lubec for denying the divinity of Christ, the Lutheran universities of Kilan and Witteberg having signified their approbation of the sentence against him. See *Bibliothec. Brem.* class. 1 fasc. 5. p. 739.—768. Whatever right Servetus might have to dissent from an established religion which appeared to him absurd, and, if you will, to reason against it, surely he had no right to rail at it, to insult it, and to blaspheme what it accounted most sacred and venerable. The Apostles demonstrated the folly of idolatry by unanswerable arguments; they enforced their reasonings by the most amazing miracles; and yet the town-clerk of Ephesus did them the justice to testify that they were no robbers of churches, nor blasphemers of the Ephesian goddess. Had they been either, infidels might have speciously urged, that their being persecuted unto death was the just reward of their rude, uncivil, hot-brained enthusiasm. Painting new opinions or practices in ludicrous colours,

the foundation of the world, and yet not slain till several thousand years after, till the day of his death; so also men are called elect from the foundation of the world, and yet are not elected perhaps till several thousand years after, till the day of their conversion to God."

*Ib. p. 5.* "If the saints are chosen to salvation through a believing of the truth, and were called to believe that truth by the hearing of the gospel, then they were not chosen before they believed the truth; and before they heard the gospel, whereby they were called to believe. But they were chosen through belief of the truth, and called to believe it by the gospel; therefore they were not chosen before they believed; much less before they had a being, any more than Christ was slain before he had a being. So plain is it, that they were not elected till they believed; although God calleth things that are not as though they were."

I had said, "Many sober-minded Arminians would be shocked at the virulent reflections Mr Wesley has cast on the Calvinist doctrines of election, &c." To this Mr Kershaw replies, *p. 74.* "1. As this is something of a personal reflection, and has been already answered by the gentleman it concerns, I have nothing to do with it. I leave the editor and Mr Wesley to decide the point. 2. I have read those pieces, but do remember no reflections, without consequences go by that name."

In Mr Wesley's letter to the supposed editor, there is not a syllable about the above charge. If he has answered it anywhere else, I have not heard of the answer. The second part of Mr Kershaw's apology is good for nothing. Horrible consequences falsely ascribed to a doctrine, may sometimes contain the most virulent reflections; and this

colours, and exposing the folly or knavery of those who would introduce them, may often do much to stop their progress. But of all weapons that have been used against an established religion, ribaldry is the very worst. None disobliges and offends more, and yet none does less execution. Of Calvin's confessing that he procured Servetus's death, I know no evidence. He has denied the charge, *Opusc. p. 817.* *Ex quo convittus est, me nullum de pena verbum fecisse, non solum boni omnes viri mibi testes erunt; sed malis etiam concedo, ut preferant, si quid habent.*

was all that my charge against Mr Wesley imported. I am now about to prove it well grounded.

Mr Wesley's sermon, intituled *Free grace*, printed at Bristol 1739, is designed to expose the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, *i. e.* as Mr Wesley expresses it, p. 7. "The doctrine, that God did elect a certain number of men to salvation ; that all these will be saved, and none else ; that the rest of mankind God leaves to themselves, and so they follow the imaginations of their own hearts, and are at length justly punished with everlasting destruction." This doctrine he endeavours to show makes all preaching vain, and tends to destroy the comfort of religion, nay holiness too and zeal for good works, nay to overthrow the Christian revelation, by making it contradict itself.—P. 22. "It is a doctrine full of blasphemy : it represents Jesus Christ the righteous as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity."—p. 23. "He calls those to come to him that cannot come, those whom he knows to be unable to come, those whom he can make able to come, but will not. How is it possible to describe greater insincerity ? You represent him as mocking his helpless creatures, by offering what he never intends to give."—p. 24. "It represents the most holy God as worse than the devil ; as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More false ; because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said, he willeth all men to be saved : more unjust ; because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say, that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace he will not give them, they cannot avoid : and more cruel ; because that unhappy spirit seeketh rest and findeth none, so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others ; but God resteth in his high and holy place : so that to suppose him, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures, whether they will or not, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him, as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man."—p. 26. "Upon the supposition of this doctrine, one might say to our adversary the devil, Thou fool, why dost thou roar about any longer ? Thy lying in wait for souls

is as needless and useless as our preaching. Hearest thou not that God hath taken thy work out of thy hands, and that he doth it much more effectually? Thou canst only intice, but his unchangeable decree, to leave thousands of souls in death, compels them to continue in sin, till they drop into everlasting burnings. Thou temptest; he foreteth us to be damned. Hearest thou not that God is the devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of man?"

Never did I see such bitter and unfair reflections on the Calvinists, unless in a piece of Castalio's, which I happened to glance above twenty years ago, and which left on my mind an unusual impression of horror. I am not to enter into a doctrinal controversy with Mr Wesley. The preface and defence, like his letter to Mr Hervey, are intended for caution, not for confutation. Cole on God's sovereignty, the Limestreet sermons, Cooper on predestination, and other books abundantly common, have shown, that such consequences do not indeed flow from the Calvinist doctrine. If a further defence be needful, I doubt not some who have leisure and ability will undertake it. All I shall say is, If doing a thing, or permitting it to be done in time, is consistent with God's moral perfections, the eternally decreeing thus to do or permit can never be contrary to them, unless the eternally resolving to do a just thing is unjust. God's decree compels no man to sin, and deprives him of no power to do good. You will say, there flows from the decree an infallible certainty of men's sinning, and perishing in their sins. I allow it: but a certainty no more infallible than would flow from the divine fore-knowledge, which Mr Wesley himself allows as a scripture-truth. If the last does not infer the creature constrained, neither does the first. God hath indued the will of man (as is well observed *Westminster confession*, c. 9.) with that natural liberty that is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to do good or evil. If man has lost ability to spiritual good, his inability flows not from want of natural powers, but from the depraved byass of his heart: if that depraved byass were cured, duty would be easy. Now, an inability which flows from depravity of heart, may well aggravate guilt, but can

can never excuse it ; unless when wickedness becomes obstinate and incurable it ceases to be criminal ; and stubborn rebels against the sovereign Lord of the universe have found a device, by their stubbornness of heart, to free themselves from all obligation to loyalty and allegiance.

From the above extracts and observations, it will appear what force there is in the apology for Mr Wesley, *Appeal*, p. 100, 101. "Neither does he say, that predestination " is naturally deadly poison ; only, that upon some it has " that deadly effect. Mr Wesley looks on it to be an " edged tool, (as the faculty speak of mercury), if not in " the hand of a wise man it may do much harm." Wrong opinions must be the least enemy of religion, or no enemy at all, if a doctrine is not naturally deadly poison, that makes preaching vain, tends to destroy holiness, represents Christ as a deceiver, and the holy God as worse than the devil. Every person, according to Mr Wesley, who maintains, that God from eternity ordained whatsoever should come to pass, must either equivocate and prevaricate, or honestly avow that God is the author of all sin, and the destroyer of the greater part of mankind without mercy. Compare *Dialogue between a predestinarian and his friend*, at the beginning, with the dedication, p. 4. Is there not deadly poison in a doctrine, which can justly be charged with such shocking blasphemy ?

Mr Kershaw says, p. 76. "If the editor imagines Mr Wesley lays our works at the bottom of all the fabric " of redemption," (I suppose he meant to have said predestination, of which the former sentence speaks), " he does " not understand him." Mr Wesley does not lay our works as the foundation of the conditional decree of saving such who should believe, for of that he supposes God's love of pity the cause : but he does suppose them the cause of our actual election, and of Christ's becoming to us in particular the author of eternal salvation. See *Scripture-doctrine concerning predestination*, p. 6, 8.

I had observed Mr Wesley's asserting, that to say Christ died for the elect as elect, is to say that he accomplished a solemn nothing ; because the elect, as such, are not lost. Mr Kershaw tells us, p. 79. that a few weeks ago Mr Wesley

ley himself answered this to the editor, together with all that is material in the preface.

Apprehending that this ill-grounded allegiance might have more effect than all Mr Kershaw's arguments, I sent him Mr Wesley's letter, signifying my willingness it should be published as an appendix to his *Earnest Appeal*. Mr Kershaw returned me the following note.

" As Mr Kershaw had, as he apprehends, sufficient reasons for taking notice of Mr Wesley's letter to the Editor, seeing many made an *ill use* of his *silence* in that respect, when he was here lately; and as he apprehends the letter *implicitly* justifies all he said of it *as wrote to the Editor*, he is by no means unwilling it should be published. Nevertheless, neither the Editor nor the Public can look upon it *as Mr Wesley's full answer* to the Preface. Mr Kershaw is sensible Mr Wesley never intended it as such; for if he had, he would have precluded the necessity of his *Reply*. When the note from the Editor came to hand, near three hundred copies of the *Reply* were gone off, so that it was impossible to print it in the way desired."

How far Mr Wesley's letter was an answer to any thing material in the preface, the reader will best judge by perusing it.

*Edinburgh, April 24. 1765.*

REVEREND SIR,

BETWEEN thirty and forty years I have had the world upon me, speaking all manner of evil. And I expected no less, as God had called me to testify that its deeds were evil. But the children of God were not upon me: nor did I expect they would. I rather hoped they would take knowledge, that all my designs, and thought, and care, and labour, were directed to this one point, To advance the kingdom of Christ upon earth. And so many of them did, however differing from me, both in opinions and modes of worship. I have the pleasure to mention Dr Doddridge, Dr Watts, and Mr Wardrobe, in particular. How then was I surprised, as well as concerned, that a child of the same Father, a servant of the same Lord, a member of the same family, and (as to the essence of it) a preacher of the same gospel, should, without any provocation that I know of, declare open war against me! I was the more

more surprised, because you had told me some months since, that you would favour me with a letter. And had this been done, I make no doubt but you would have received full satisfaction. Instead of this, you ushered into this part of the world, one of the most bitter libels that was ever wrote against me: wrote by a dying man, (so far as it was wrote by poor, well-meating Mr Hervey), with a trembling hand, just as he was tottering on the margin of the grave: A great warrior resigned his crown, because "there should be some interval, he said, between fighting and death." But Mr Hervey, who had been a man of peace all his life, began a war not six months before he died. He drew his sword, when he was just putting off his body. He then fell on one to whom he had the deepest obligations, (as his own letters, which I have now in my hands, testify), on one who had never *intentionally* wronged him, who had never spoken an unkind word of him, or to him, and who loved him as his own child. O tell it not in Gath! The good Mr Hervey (if these letters were his) died cursing his spiritual father!

And these letters another good man, Mr ——, has introduced into Scotland, and warmly recommended. Why have you done this? "Because you have concealed your principles, which is palpable *dishonesty*."

When I was first invited into Scotland, (about 14 years ago), Mr Whitefield told me, "You have no business there: for your principles are so well known, that if you spoke like an angel, none will hear you. And if they did, you would have nothing to do but to *dispute* with one and another from morning to night."

I answered, "If God sends me, people will hear. And I will give them no provocation to dispute: for I will studiously avoid controverted points, and keep to the fundamental truths of Christianity. And if any still begin to dispute, they may: but I will not dispute with them."

I came. Hundreds and thousands flocked to hear. But I was enabled to keep my word. I avoided whatever might engender strife, and insisted upon the grand points, the religion of the heart, and salvation by faith, at all times, and in all places. And by this means, I have cut off all occasion of dispute, from the first day to this very hour.

And

And this you amazingly improve into a fault; construe into a proof of *dishonesty*. You likewise charge me with holding *unsound principles*, and with saying, "Right opinions are (sometimes) no part of religion."

The last charge I have answered over and over, and very lately to Bp Warburton. Certainly had you read that single tract, you would never have repeated that stale objection.

As to my principles, every one knows, or may know, that I believe the thirty-first article of the church of England. But can none be saved who believe this? I know you will not say so. Meantime, in the main point, justification by faith, I have not wavered a moment for these seven and twenty years. And I allow all which Mr Hervey himself contends for, in his entrance upon the subject, "Come to Jesus as a *needy beggar*: hang upon him as a *devoted pensioner*." And whoever does this, I will be bold to say, shall not perish everlastingily.

As to your main objection, convince me that it is my duty to preach on controverted subjects, predestination in particular, and I will do it. At present, I think it would be a sin. I think, it would create still more divisions. And are there not enough already? I have seen a book wrote by one who styles himself, *Ecclesiae Scoticae direpta et genitamentis Presbyter*. Shall I tear *ecclesiam direptam et genitamentem*? God forbid! No; I will, so far as I can, heal her breaches. And if you really love her, (as I doubt not you do), why should you hinder me from so doing? Has she so many friends and helpers left, that you should strive to lessen their number? Would you wish to turn any of her friends, even though weak and mistaken, into enemies? If you must contend, have you not Arians, Socinians, seceders, infidels, to contend with? to say nothing of whoremongers, adulterers, sabbath-breakers, drunkards, common swearers! *O ecclesia gemens!* And will you pass by all these, and single out *me* to fight with? Nay, but I will not. I do and will fight with all these, but not with *you*. I cannot: I dare not. You are the son of my Father; my fellow-labourer in the gospel of his dear Son. I love your person: I love your character: I love the work wherein you are engaged. And if you will still shoot at me, (because

cause Mr Hervey has painted me as a monster), even with arrows drawn from Bishop Warburton's quiver, (how unfit for Mr ——'s hand!) I can only say, as I always did before, the Lord Jesus bless you in your soul, in your body, in your relations, in your work, in whatever tends to his own glory! I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

Mr Wesley has thought it his duty to write against the doctrine of the Westminster Confession, as to predestination, justification, &c, looking upon it as fatal to precious souls. Where-ever therefore he observes plants growing up, that to him appear so poisonous, true benevolence must needs prompt him to endeavour the rooting them out. In Scotland, as well as in England, these doctrines are preached; and if human nature is the same in North as in South Britain, immoral and licentious opinions must in both have the same effects. If therefore the Methodist preachers in Scotland have not attacked these doctrines, and if Mr Wesley approves their conduct, no reasonable account of this can be given, unless that they prudently conclude, a precipitate attack might alarm many of their new proselytes, occasion their forsaking them, and thus prevent that success, which might probably be secured by delay, till they gain a fuller ascendant over their followers.

This was the light in which I viewed and still view Mr Wesley's conduct, and therefore thought it no way inconsistent with Christian charity, to warn those who as yet believe the doctrines of the Westminster confession, not to put themselves under the inspection of a teacher whose principles must oblige him to undermine, if possible, that belief. I once intended to have writ Mr Wesley; and the only time I ever talked with him, signified to him that intention. But, upon mature reflection, I saw no cause to flatter myself, either that I could procure from him satisfaction as to what offended me in his writings and conduct, or that I could convince him he was in the wrong. He had, in my apprehension, discovered himself no novice in the arts of subtlety and disguise. This discouraged me from

from a correspondence, which might more probably answer a bad purpose than a good one. A public warning against the growth of Methodism was judged necessary. Those better qualified declining the task, I was at length prevailed upon to undertake it.

Mr Wesley's catholic charity has not restrained him from declaring his resolution to fight with Seceders, nay, from ranking them with Arians and Socinians \*. Their peculiar opinions and practices are much less important than the doctrinal articles in which he differs from the church of Scotland. Why then deems he it uncharitable in a member of that church, to contend with one, who, in the keenest manner, has contended against these doctrinal articles ?

Thus I have answered what is material in Mr Wesley's letter, except his reference to his letter to the Bishop of Gloucester, which will afterwards fall in my way.

Mr Wesley had said, *Preservative*, p. 192. " We believe that in the moment Adam fell he had no freedom of will left ; but that God, when, of his own free grace, he gave the promise of a Saviour to him and his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation." Mr Kershaw asks, p. 80, 81. " Did the editor insert this paragraph to defeat his intention, and confute the whole vindication ? Did ever an Arminian in the world declare, I believe that in the moment Adam fell he had no freedom of will left ?" I did not charge this paragraph with Arminianism ; nay, I think the first part of it verges to the opposite extreme. The will is endued with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by an absolute necessity determined to do good or evil. This holds good even with respect not only to the most depraved of mankind, but to devils themselves ; otherwise they would cease to be the subjects of God's government, and could not as moral agents be punished for their bad tempers and conduct. You will perhaps plead, that Mr Wesley did not mean to deny man's natural but

\* It would be wrong to conclude from this, that Mr Wesley has no charity for Seceders : for Michael Servetus, one of the wildest Antitrinitarians that ever appeared, has been pronounced by him a wise and holy man.

his moral ability. This last was undoubtedly lost by the fall : but then, if this is his meaning, he errs in asserting, that God hath restored to mankind a moral power to accept of proffered salvation. A moral power and an inclination is the same thing. If mankind in general were inclined to accept the proffered salvation, all to whom it is proffered would in fact accept it, as want of inclination can be the only hindrance of such acceptance. In a word, man by the fall lost not his natural powers, and to mankind in general moral powers are not restored.

I see no force in what Mr Kershaw has said to vindicate the Methodists from the charge of forming a church within a church, and leave it without remark. I thank him for correcting my mistake, " that the Methodist teachers are sent, continued, or removed, at the pleasure of Mr Wesley," by observing, p. 84. " Mr Wesley is not without coadjutors, who act in concert with him ; and what is done, is usually done by consent of the whole."

P. 85.—97. Mr Kershaw criticises the editor for saying, " Could not the Methodists be witnesses to Christianity, without that inquiry into one another's religious experiences, which Christ has no where enjoined, either as a moral duty, or a mean of grace ?" Most of what he says is wide of the point. The lawfulness of religious societies for prayer, praise, and Christian conference, I never denied ; though I think when such societies meet frequently, and are long together, they are an obstruction to family and private devotion, and breach of the precept, " Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work." Neither did I question the happiness of finding a Christian friend to whom we may freely impart our spiritual comforts or distresses ; though I think too, there are cases in which the heart alone should know its own bitterness, and a stranger, however dear to us, should not intermeddle with its joy. What I find fault with, I shall state as briefly as possible.

It appears from p. 88. of the *Earnest Appeal*, that the religious experiences inquired into include all things felt in the minds of religious people, whatever God does for their precious souls, whatever temptations or buffettings they may feel from Satan, whatever strugglings and workings from a corrupt nature, and all those temptations and con-

sicks in the minds of the religious, arising from the world in its various appearances, connections, or relations, or the providential dispensations by which God proves their virtue, and exercises their patience.

The Methodists conduct their inquiries into religious experiences in this extensive sense of the word: 1. More privately. "There are" (says, Mr Wesley, *Nature, design, and general rules of the united societies*, p. 4.) "about twelve persons in every class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his business to see each person in his class, once a week at the least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper, &c." 2. More publicly in the meetings of their classes. *Earnest Appeal*, p. 89. "The leader or teacher asks every one a few questions relating to the present situation of their minds, in order that he may the better speak to their edification."

The church of Rome maintain, that in the sacrament of penance, it is *surely* necessary to the remission of sins, to confess all and every mortal sin, even the most secret, which can with diligent premeditation be called to mind, together with the circumstances which change the kind of sin; and the priest is directed to ask prudent questions, where the penitent does not express the number, the kinds, and the necessary circumstances of his sins. Against this, it has been justly objected, that there is the utmost danger of violating modesty, by putting questions, under pretence of searching sin to the bottom, which shall suggest wicked thoughts to the minds of young and unexperienced persons, such as otherwise would never have entered there: and that auricular confession, if it is made a point of conscience to confess the most secret sins, leaves the reputation, and, in some cases, the life of the laity at the mercy of the clergy, not only by divulging what is confessed, but by improving their knowledge of mens weaknesses, inclinations, &c. to gain an ascendant over them, and to seduce them to subserve their mercenary or licentious designs. A leader of a class inquiring at the eleven under his charge, what temptations of Satan, what workings of corrupt nature, or conflicts from his worldly circumstances he has encountered, is liable to the very same abuses. If inquiries are honestly answered, the rest of the class are at the mercy of

their leader; if not, they acquire habits of hypocrisy and dissimulation.

But let us suppose, what can hardly be expected, that every leader of a class is possessed of eminent measures of probity and prudence: yet surely it is next to impossible, that all under his inspection should resemble him in these qualities. In the meetings of a class, the experience of every one who belongs to it, is inquired after, and all present hear the account. A judicious writer has observed, that even in truly gracious experiences, there is often an unhappy mixture of human or natural affections or passions, impressions on the imagination, and self-righteousness, or spiritual pride; and that experiences are apt to degenerate, by men laying great weight on the natural and imaginary part, and yielding to, and indulging it \*. This degeneracy may be probably increased by a rash, frequent, and promiscuous relation of uncommon experiences. The relators may begin to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. Some of a more tender and circumspect behaviour may be discouraged, because strangers to those extraordinary manifestations: and the narrating our doubts and scruples, the temptations that have assaulted us, or the workings of indwelling corruption in our hearts, may often excite similar doubts or temptations in the breasts of the hearers. A secret can hardly be kept by twelve: and if there is any thing singular in an experience, probably it will be handed about as a secret to the confidants of every member of a class, and to the confidants of these confidants, till it takes air, is publicly talked of, and by the profane turned into ridicule. He who is satisfied with divine consolations, can enjoy rest without divulging what he has felt; while others, if the companions hearken to their voice, are little concerned to cause God to hear it. These arguments, however, do not militate against Christians often conversing together on the works of creation, providence, and redemption, the glories of the Saviour, the wonders of God's law and gospel, and the important realities of a future world; nor against imparting to familiar friends, especially when in anguish of spirit, those

\* Edwards's thoughts on the revival, &c. Edin. edit. p. 158, 165.  
consolations,

consolations, wherewith they in like circumstances have been comforted of God. Not to observe, that valuable purposes may be often gained by exhibiting to public view the riches of divine power and grace in remarkable conversions.

The duties of loving one another, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep, of praying for one another, and of bearing one another's burdens, are not confined to those of the same class, but extend to all our fellow Christians. Therefore, if they infer an obligation on those of the same class, they infer an obligation on Christians in general, to inquire into one another's experiences, which I suppose Mr Kershaw will hardly plead for.—He is right in saying, the consequence is not good; a thing may be abused to bad purposes, and therefore ought not to be done: because eating and drinking, nay, the Bible, may be abused. But a little reflection might have suggested to him, that though no degree of danger should deter us from a necessary duty, probable bad consequences should restrain us from acting, when no divine precept necessitates us to act. It is therefore a hasty conclusion which he draws, p. 90. “that which is neither forbidden in scripture, nor sinful in itself, nor in its necessary consequences, is no sin.” For circumstances of time, place, company, &c. may render a thing, in its own nature indifferent, sometimes a duty, and sometimes a sin.

Mr Kershaw pleads, p. 98.—103. that Mr Wesley's reasons against separation from the church of England, or attending the meetings of dissenters, when in South Britain, equally conclude against the Methodist teachers in Edinburgh separating from the church of Scotland, or attending the qualified Episcopal meetings there.—I should be apt, on a superficial view, to be of the same mind. The danger of giving offence, exciting controversy, and preventing thousands from either hearing them or continuing with them, may be as good a political motive for seeming to favour the establishment of Calvinism and Presbytery in one country, as that of Episcopacy in another. Nay, the argument will go much farther. The same prudential rule, if calculated for the meridians of Stockholm, Petersburg, or Vienna, equally directs similar marks of regard to

Lutheranism, the Greek church, or the church of Rome. In all these churches; opinions may be professed opposite to Mr Wesley's: but, so far as I can judge, no opinions that appear to him more dangerous than predestination, final perseverance, and the imputation of Christ's active obedience. But Mr Kershaw seems to forget Mr Wesley's 12th reason against separation from the church of England, That by such separation, they should act in direct contradiction to that very end for which providence had raised them up, *viz.* to quicken their brethren. "The first message, *says he*, of all our preachers, is, to the lost sheep of the church of England. Now, would it not be a flat contradiction to this design, to separate from the church?" Are there in North Britain no lost sheep of the church of England? or is less pity due to them, because their form of religion has not the advantage of a legal establishment, or of the approbation of the majority of the people? If the first message of the Methodist preachers is to them, should not the very principles, which restrained them from attending dissenting meetings at London, restrain them from attending Presbyterian churches in Edinburgh? The zeal of dissenters generally exceeds that of an established church: and if occasionally hearing in a Presbyterian meeting, offends Episcopals at London, Episcopals here will be much more offended, by their almost constant attendance in Presbyterian churches.

The reasonings in Mr Wesley's *Letter*, and in the *Earnest Appeal*, p. 103.—116. may show the impropriety of filling the pulpit or even the press with matters of doubtful disputation, but can never reconcile it with ministerial faithfulness, to give no warning, when errors prevail subversive of vital piety; nay, that imply the most shocking blasphemy.

P. 111. Mr Kershaw proceeds to vindicate Mr Wesley's saying, "It is a point we chiefly insist upon, that orthodoxy, or right opinion, is at best but a very slender part of religion, if any part of it at all." But as he refers to Mr Wesley's answer to the Bishop of Gloucester, I must begin with considering what is advanced there on this subject.

And here, instead of satisfaction, I find little else than that

that shifting, at which Mr Wesley is so singularly expert. P. 17. he acknowledges it our duty to labour after a right judgment in all things; as a wrong judgment naturally leads to wrong practice. P. 19. he allows that right opinions are a great help, and wrong opinions a great hindrance to religion. P. 20. he disclaims saying that errors in faith have little to do with religion, or that they are no less or impediment to the holy spirit.

Yet he says, p. 17. "I say again, right opinion is at best but a very slender part of religion, (which properly and directly consists in right tempers, words and actions), and frequently it is no part of religion. For it may be where there is no religion at all: in men of the most abandoned lives: yea, in the devil himself.

If religion consists in right tempers, the love of God, and consequently what is necessary to produce that love, is no slender part of religion. But how can the love of God be produced in the heart, without suitable opinions of God's loveliness and love? Such opinions are therefore essential to religion, because without them religion never subsists: and the devil's believing the divine perfections, no more proves that right opinion is a slender part of religion, than a projector's laying the foundation of a fabric which he finds himself unable to rear, proves, that a foundation is at best but a slender part of a building, and often no part of it at all.

I stay not to examine Mr Wesley's criticism of Bp Warburton's interpretation of *Eph. v. 9*. If Mr Wesley is right in adopting Bengelius's various reading, "the fruit of light is in all goodness, &c." then right tempers are produced by light in the understanding, i. e. by right sentiments: and Mr Wesley asserts, without ground, p. 20. that God, generally speaking, begins his work at the heart. His argument is, "Men usually feel desires to please God, before they know how to please him. Their heart says, *What must I do to be saved?* before they understand the way of salvation." I reply, Men feel no desire to please God, or even to escape his wrath, till they know something of God; and men can never fall in with a plan of salvation, of which they are wholly ignorant. In the

new,

new, as in the old creation, God begins with saying, Let there be light.

Let us now see if there is more argument in Mr Kershaw's tedious defence. P. 112. he argues from James's description of religion, *Jam. i. 26, 27.* as consisting in bridling the tongue, visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world: and asks, "What is there here that contradicts Mr Wesley's assertion?" I reply, What if there were nothing? If right opinion is a slender part of religion, because omitted in this passage, will not the same argument equally conclude, that love to God is a slender part of religion too? Besides, right opinion is not omitted in this passage. If we look back to the preceding verses, 23, 25. we shall find the religious person a hearer of the word, and not a forgetful hearer, but one who looketh into the perfect law of liberty. If we look forward to the following verse, *Ja. ii. 1.* he is one who has the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory: not to insist that the bridling the tongue, v. 26. has a chief reference to the abuse of the tongue in religious matters, e. g. by charging the Deity with tempting us to sin, *Ja. i. 13.* or by asserting that a profession of faith is sufficient to constitute men Christians, without any good works manifesting the sincerity of that profession, *Ja. ii. 14.*

In the same page he calls us to hear what reason says: "Every part is essential to the whole; for the whole is made up of all its parts: now take away any of its parts, and the whole is defective. If then right opinions be essential to salvation, and the whole be destroyed if any of its essential parts be wanting, I may venture to ask, Who then can be saved? who will stake his eternal all upon it, that he is right in all his opinions? If right opinion enter into the essence of religion, then religion is destroyed at a blow, if a man be in the least wrong in his opinions." In what laborious forge that reason was hammered out, which utters these oracles, Mr Kershaw best knows. What regard they merit, let himself decide, when he has listened to some more of them, evidently the voice of this some upstart reason. Natural life consists not in the union of the soul and body; for the

the body is made up of all its parts. Now, take away any of its parts, and the whole is defective. If then the body be essential to natural life, and the whole be destroyed if any of its essential parts be wanting, life would be destroyed at a blow, if a man want a nose, a little finger, nay a hair of his head. The body therefore is not essential to animal life; and a man may make a shift to live without a head, or a heart. If here Mr Kershaw would reply, as any man of sense would, that though some of the members of the body may be wanting, and animal life remain, yet that other members are essential to it; let him reflect, that in like manner some opinions may be essential to salvation, while others are not. His proving that a man may be saved, who believes not infant-baptism; would be no proof, that a man can be saved, who believes not that there is a God.

*Earnest Appeal*, p. 113. "Let us examine what matter of fact says: Can any one have any essential part of religion, without having some religion? Surely not. If then any one can be supposed to have a right opinion, he has an essential part of religion; and therefore consequently has some religion. According to this way of reasoning it evidently follows, that there may be some essential part of religion in the worst of men, and devils likewise; this therefore proves too much to be true." By the same medium I prove, that the heart is no essential part of the human body. For an ass must be possessed of a human body, if a heart is essential to it, because an ass has a heart. If you reply, that the heart of a man and of an ass differ in their properties and operations; I beg leave to remind you, that so does right opinion in devils, in bad men, and in the truly religious. Perception of an injury done us, is one essential ingredient in forgiveness of injuries. A revengeful person has that perception, but it would be ridiculous on that account to ascribe to him that amiable virtue. A single ingredient may be essential to complex moral qualities of the most opposite nature. Some knowledge of the gospel of Christ is essential both to a love of that gospel, and to a malicious opposition of it.

P. 113. near the foot, "Religion sometimes means the work of God in the soul, and a suitable conduct only; " in

" in this sense Mr Wesley uses it." Be it so: yet still enlightning the understanding, or producing there right sentiments of divine things, is an essential part of the work of God in the soul. And right opinion is as essential to suitable conduct, as a fountain to the streams, or a foundation to the superstructure.

I had said, " I much question if Mr Wesley will not find " it a task too hard for him, to prove, that ignorance and " error are as friendly to virtue as just sentiments." To this Mr Kershaw replies, p. 115. " It is certainly enough for " Mr Wesley if he can maintain and prove his own pro- " position: for then, in the next place, the editor himself " must prove, that the consequences he has inferred from " these premises are fair, natural, and necessary: but that " he cannot do, till he has overturned what is here said " in their defence, &c." If right opinion is a slender part of religion, or no part of it at all, then the want of right opinion, or the opposite to it, must be a slender obstacle to religion, or rather no obstacle at all; and then ignorance and error may be as friendly to religion as just sentiments. I have met with nothing in the *Earnest Appeal* to invalidate this consequence.

It is insinuated, p. 118. that they who draw such dreadful consequences from Mr Wesley's proposition, perhaps do all they can to murder the cause of God. To support this heavy charge, it is asked, p. 119. " Have you not seen " some thousands in Britain and Ireland, who were once " openly profane, wicked, irreligious persons, but are " now, as far as man can judge, really converted by the " means of Mr Wesley, and those who are with him in the " work, &c. &c. ? Is not this the Lord's doing? and can " any but God convert sinners?" And, p. 120. " Upon " a supposition that this work is of God, (and is it impos- " sible to be true?), when Christ is in your assemblies, as " he certainly is where two or three are met in his name, " and the minister sounding his alarm as zealously as Paul " when going to Damascus, Jesus may be saying, Why " persecutest thou me in my members?"

To this I reply, 1. I have not such evidence of the facts, from which it is concluded, that thousands have been converted by Mr Wesley and those with him in the work; as I have,

I have, that many of Mr Wesley's opinions are false, and some of them dangerous errors. For the first I have at best the testimony of man, who may be deceived; for the last, the infallible testimony of God in the sacred oracles.

2. There may be a visible change in the conduct to the better, from other causes than saving grace. 3. Suppose the aforesaid conversions were all real, will God's blessing his own truths as preached by any, prove, that dangerous errors, mingled by them with those truths, ought to be countenanced at. The scriptures, not the personal character of a minister, or the success of his ministrations, is the touchstone by which the truth of every particular opinion he advances, ought to be tried. I suppose Mr Wesley will not say, that he and his associates have done more to promote the interests of religion than Calvin and Zwinglius did; and yet he must think, that they who keenly opposed their doctrine as to predestination, &c. did right, and were by no means guilty, in consequence of that opposition, of fighting against God. Peter was the instrument of converting thousands; and yet Paul, when notwithstanding him at Antioch, was not fighting against God.

P. 120, 121. "Can any man imagine that Mr Wesley  
 "should avow a principle, from which it might easily be  
 "inferred, that he supposes both ignorance and error are  
 "as friendly to virtue as just sentiments? — Are not  
 "Mr Wesley's whole life and labours a confutation of  
 "this incongruous inference? — Pray to what end has  
 "Mr Wesley indefatigably laboured above thirty years,  
 "in translating, extracting, abridging, and composing  
 "books of experimental and practical divinity, &c." I  
 charge not Mr Wesley with asserting, that ignorance and  
 error are as friendly to virtue as just sentiments: but if  
 this is a just inference from a proposition maintained by  
 him, he is bound to defend it, or else to renounce the pro-  
 position too. Mr Kershaw might have seemingly enforced  
 his argument from Mr Wesley's pieces on predestination  
 and justification; but they would only farther prove, that  
 there are inconsistencies in his writings and conduct.

P. 122.—124. Odium is endeavoured to be cast on the  
 prefacer, as maintaining, that all who believe not absolute  
 and unconditional predestination shall be damned. To  
 this

this I would only say, that few Calvinists assert predestination to be absolute and unconditional, in the sense in which their opponents understand these phrases. They assert, that the salvation of some and damnation of others, is so determined in the divine decree, that the event is not suspended on any precarious condition, but is infallibly certain: but they don't assert that the divine decree is founded on no wise reasons to us unknown, but on mere arbitrary will; nor do they say, that an end is so fixed that it shall be obtained without the means; but teach, that where the end is ordained, the means are ordained also. Neither are the bulk of Calvinists uncharitable to those who differ from them. While almost all the Lutherans pronounce the Calvinist doctrine of predestination a fundamental error, the Calvinists as generally and justly maintain, that the difference betwixt them and the Lutherans is not fundamental. For my own part, I gratefully acknowledge my obligations to many Lutheran divines, who write in a strain remarkably evangelical, and I think have been excelled by none in explaining and defending justification through the obedience and sufferings of Christ; yet still the Calvinist doctrine of predestination appears to me revealed in scripture, which it would not have been, had the belief of it been of no importance: and Mr Wesley's variation from that doctrine is, as I apprehend, much more dangerous than those of the Lutheran churches.

Yet this is not the worst error vented by Mr Wesley: He asserts justification by faith as fulfilling the condition of a new covenant, as obeying a new law, or as the great master-duty of the gospel, which includes every other act of new obedience. I question not that good men, by a becoming zeal against Antinomianism, have been betrayed into such assertions, without considering their full import; while, in the mean time, they have looked for eternal life, not on account of their own virtues, or good works, but on account of the merits and sufferings of Jesus; yet in these modes of expression they have grossly deviated from the form of sound words. And it is a melancholy symptom of a falling, or rather a fallen church, when the method of acceptance with God, implied in these assertions,

is generally taught and believed. See *Jer.* xxxiii. 16. *Gal.* i. 6.—9. & ii. 21.

The charge in Mr Kershaw's appendix of first-rate fundamental mistakes in *Appias vindicated*, is so poorly supported, that it deserves no reply. And thus I think I have answered Mr Kershaw in the manner he desires, p. 130, except that I have not set my name to the performance. That circumstance is of no consequence to the public, since I assert no facts without appealing to my vouchers. If I had published my name, an artful answerer might have led away the attention of his reader from the charge against Mr Wesley, to some lesser points, in which, on other occasions, I have declared my dissent from certain commonly-received opinions. However, to gratify Mess. Wesley and Kershaw, I now acquaint them, that they are right in their conjecture as to the author of the preface; and therefore that my opinions appear, by my former publications, to differ in some particulars from Mr Hervey's; tho' there was no medium in the preface from which this fact could be fairly concluded, and Mr Kershaw's logic blundered in drawing from it that inference.

I shall now conclude with some remarks on Mr Wesley's writings, which could not be properly introduced in the preceding defence.

*Sermons*, vol. I. p. 173. he explains *Rom.* vii. of the struggle betwixt legal convictions and depraved inclinations; and, *ib.* p. 193. explains the testimony of the Spirit, as an inward impression upon the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God. The first of these interpretations is well refuted in *Dickinson's familiar letters*, and the second in *Edwards on religious affections*\*. Many judicious divines have indeed fallen into both these mistakes; yet they are not without their danger. The first may greatly discourage the humble Christian, who groans under the workings of indwelling corruption; and the second may strengthen the wicked in his wickedness, while he concludes, that a false and enthusiastical impression is the witness of the Spirit.

\* It seems to me a strong proof of the bad taste of the age, that the republishing so judicious a treatise has not met with due encouragement.

*Sermons*, vol. I. p. 26. "Sincerity therefore is necessarily implied in the being almost a Christian; a real design to serve God; a hearty desire to do his will; a sincere view of pleasing God in all things, in all his conversation, in all his actions, in all he does, or leaves undone. This design, if any man be almost a Christian, runs through the whole tenor of his life."—Was David mistaken when he said, *Psal.* cxix. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have a respect to all thy commandments?"

*Ib.* vol. II. p. 265.—269. In explaining *Math.* vi. 19. he observes, that it is lawful to lay up what is necessary to discharge our just debts; to provide for ourselves and families the plain necessaries of life; to put our children in a capacity, when we are gone, to provide for themselves these necessaries, by diligent labour; and to enable us to carry on our worldly business in such measure as is sufficient to answer these purposes: but that labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance than will answer these purposes, is absolutely forbidden."—This tends to perplex tender consciences with endless scruples. Ministers should beware of laying burdens on men which God has not laid. God has indeed denounced a woe against those that add house to house, and land to land, till there be no place in the earth; and has charged the rich to be rich in good works: but if it is lawful to transmit to our children an estate, which we ourselves inherited, as Mr Wesley acknowledges, why should it be unlawful to transmit to them an estate which we have acquired by honest industry? Is not the last as lawful a property, and as entirely at our disposal, as the first?

*Ib.* p. 305. he thus explains *Rom.* x. 3, 4. "Being ignorant of that holiness of heart, which is termed *God's righteousness*, being his free gift through Christ, and his own work by his Spirit, and labouring to establish that outside righteousness, which may be termed *their own*, because neither wrought by the Spirit of God, nor owned and accepted of him, but wrought by their own natural strength, they hardened themselves against that faith, whereby alone it was possible to attain this inward righteousness. For Christ put an end to the law of external rites and ceremonies, that he might bring in a better righteousness through his blood, even the image of God into the inmost soul of every

**every one that believeth.**" And, p. 306. he explains *the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. to mean, that holiness of heart, which is the work of God through faith in Christ.—These interpretations should have been mentioned, when I was considering his scheme of justification.

*Sermons*, vol. III. p. 47. "On the other hand, they, whose hearers, if unrighteous before, remain unrighteous still, or at least void of any righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; they are false prophets, they are not sent of God; therefore their word falls to the ground."—That a faithful minister may labour without success, the scripture denieth not, and experience confirms.

*Ib.* vol. II. p. 50. & seq. he denies the perseverance of the saints, and represents the gradual manner of their apostasy. And, p. 53. he supposes that faith and love were extinct in Peter, when he committed the act of dissimulation for which Paul withheld him to the face.

*Ib.* vol. I. p. 8. "They (*viz.* believers) are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises."—How one who believes his total and final apostasy possible can truly love God, and yet feel no fear of so dreadful an evil, is inconceivable.

Mr Wesley seems to maintain not only the attainableness of sinless perfection in a present life, but that it is actually attained by every one born of God.

*Character of a Methodist*, 3d edit. p. 10. "Whatsoever he doth, is all to the glory of God. In all his employments of every kind, he not only aims at this, (which is implied in having a single eye), but actually attains it. His business and refreshments, as well as his prayers, all serve to this great end. Whether he sit in his house, or walk by the way, he is promoting, in all he speaks or does, the one business of his life."

*Sermons*, vol. I. p. 9. He that is by faith born of God, sinneth not, 1. By any habitual sin. 2. By any willful sin; for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. 3. By any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and

perfect will of God; and any tendency to an unholy desire, he, by the grace of God, stiflēth in the birth. Nor, 4. By infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will; and without this they are not properly sins. Thus he that is born of God doth not commit sin: and though he cannot say he hath not sinned, yet now he sinneth not.

*Sermons, vol. II. p. 23.* An immediate and constant fruit of this faith, whereby we are born of God, a fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no not for an hour, is power over sin; power over outward sin of every kind; over every evil word and work; for wheresoever the blood of Christ is thus applied, it purgeth the conscience from dead works: and over inward sin; for it purifieth the heart from every unholy desire and temper.

*Ib. p. 25.* (Having cited *1 John iii. 9.* to prove the believer's power over outward sin, he adds), "But some men will say, True; whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin habitually." Habitually! whence is that? I read it not. It is not written in the book. God plainly saith, he doth not commit sin; and thou addest, habitually! Who art thou that mendest the oracles of God? that addest to the words of this book? Beware, I beseech thee, lest God add to thee all the plagues that are written therein.

*Sermons, vol. III. p. 203.—234.* Christians are not so perfect in this life as to be free, (1.) from ignorance; (2.) from mistakes; (3.) from infirmities, i. e. inward and outward imperfections, not of a moral nature, but such as dulness or confusedness of apprehension, a treacherous memory, &c.; (4.) from temptation. But, 1. Even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin. The least that can be implied in the expressions, *Rom. vi. 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. 1 John iii. 8. v. 18.* is, that all real Christians cease from outward transgressions of God's law. It will not follow, that because David, one of the holiest men among the Jews, did commit sin, that all Christians commit sin as long as they live. They who argue thus consider not our Lord's declaration, *Matt. xi. 11.* that the least true believer is greater than the highest Old-testament saint. Solomon says, there is no man that sinneth not: and unquestionably there was none in his days, nor from

from the day that sin entered into the world, until the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins. We are told, *John* vii. 38. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified," i. e. these sanctifying influences were not bestowed whereby men are made more than conquerors over sin. For the power of working miracles cannot be meant, that having been given to the apostles, when first commissioned to preach the gospel. That this great salvation from sin was not given, till Jesus was glorified, Peter testifies; where speaking of his brethren, as now receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls; he adds, that the prophets only foretold that grace, but did not enjoy it, *1 Pet.* i. 9, 10. So far is David from being the standard of Christian perfection, that it is foretold, *Zech.* xii. 8. "He that is feeble among them shall be as David." 2. They who are strong in the Lord are freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers. Every one that is perfect, is as his Master, *Luke* vi. 40. "As he is so are we in this world, *1 John* iv. 17."

I cannot stay to give a full extract of the sermon on Christian perfection, contained in the pages above referred to. But there is an answer to an obvious objection against his scheme, which I shall transcribe, p. 218. "The apostles themselves, it is said, committed sin: nay the greatest of them, Peter and Paul. St Paul, by his sharp contention with Barnabas, and St Peter, by his dissimulation at Antioch. Well, suppose both Peter and Paul did then commit sin; what is it you would infer from hence? that all the other apostles committed sin sometimes? There is no shadow of proof in this. Or, would you thence infer, that all the other Christians of the apostolic age committed sin & worse and worse; this is such an inference as one would imagine a man in his senses could never have thought of. Or will you argue thus? If two of the apostles did once commit sin, then all other Christians, in all ages, do and will commit sin as long as they live. Alas, my brother! a child of common understanding would be ashamed of such reasoning as this."

Paul's contention with Barnabas is a strong presumption against the attainableness of perfection in this life; because of all mere men he seems to have made the greatest

est advances towards it. But it is a demonstration of the falsehood of Mr Wesley's proposition, that even babes in Christ are in so far perfect as not to commit sin. Mr Wesley will allow that Paul was then more than a babe in Christ, and yet he sinned. To say, he at that time fell from grace, will hardly quadrate with his subsequent history, at least if Mr Wesley is right in his ideas of the manner of knowing true prophets, from the fruits of their doctrine, as to themselves, and as to their hearers. *Sermons*, vol. III. p. 45.—47.

If we urge against this hypothesis *i. John i. 8.* "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:" Mr Wesley replies, *Sermons*, vol. III. p. 223. as Barclay the Quaker did before him, "that the 10th verse fixes the sense of the 8th: "If we say we have "no sin" in the former, being explained by "if we say "we have not sinned" in the latter verba. Neither of these verses assert that we sin now. And the question is not, whether we have sinned heretofore."

If these writers have reason to insist, that the phrases of forgiving sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness, *v. 9.* are not an useless tautology, I have equal reason to deny, that *ver. 10.* is a mere repetition of *ver. 8.*—The connection and sense of the four last verses, I take to be this. *Ver. 7.* "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Here it might be asked, Have they who walk in the light, as God is in the light, any moral defilement, from which they need to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus? Yes, says the apostle, *ver. 8.* "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Sin, depravity of heart, still remains. We have it, we feel its workings, tho' its dominion is broken by conversion, and its power still further weakened by progressive holiness. Nor does the efficacy of Christ's blood extend only to this, but also to these actual transgressions, from which they that walk in the light are not wholly free. *Ver. 9.* "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Sins and unrighteousness here mean, our violating by actual

tual transgressions, the duties we owe to God, to ourselves, and to one another. Ver. 10. "If we say, that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." If we say, that now we are light in the Lord, we have transgressed his precepts in no instance, in thought, word or deed; we hereby give God the lie, and prove that we never felt the saving efficacy of his word.

Absolute freedom from sin is therefore never attained in this life; for if it ever was attained, a consciousness and acknowledgment of such attainment could not, in that instance, be inconsistent with grace. Yet possibly a good man, while he feels and laments his own shortcomings, may rashly infer from the commands of being perfect, that even in this life one may cease to sin. However, from this passage it is clear, that the man who is so far gone in self-flattery, as to imagine that he himself has attained a sinless perfection, *makes God a liar*, represents his law as less strict and holy than it really is, and evidences that God's word has never had any saving efficacy upon his soul. Such thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, is opposite to that poverty of spirit, without which there is no Christianity; and prevents daily penitent application to the blood of Jesus, a habitual watchfulness against the occasions of sin, and a tender pity for our offending brethren. What then shall we think of Peter Bohler, who with three other Moravians testified to Mr Wesley of their own personal experience, that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present sins \*? What shall we think of those in the neighbourhood of Leeds, of whom Mr Wesley gives this account in his *Journal*, from 17th June 1758, to 5th May 1760, p. 983.? "Having desired that as many as could of the neighbouring towns, who believed they were saved from sin, would meet me, I spent the greatest part of this day in examining them one by one. The testimony of some I could not receive: but concerning the far greater part, it is plain, (unless it could be supposed that they tell wilful and deliberate lies),

\* *Wesley's Journal* from 1st Feb. 1738, to his return from Germany, 2d edition, p. 29.

" 1. That they feel no inward sin, and, to the best of their knowledge, commit no outward sin. 2. That they see and love God every moment, and pray, rejoice, and give thanks evermore." Or what of Mr Wesley himself? who says, "This I know, I have now peace with God: and I sin not to day, and Jesus my master has forbid me to take thought for the morrow \*." And again, "I have constant peace, not one uneasy thought; and I have freedom from sin, not one unholy desire †." Nay, what shall we think of every one, who has thoroughly imbibed the system and spirit of Mr Wesley? According to him, "none can have true faith, without knowing that he hath it; for whosoever hath it, is freed from sin, the whole body of sin is destroyed in him ‡." Mr Wesley then acknowledges none for believers, save such, who know they have faith, and know it from their freedom from sin; i. e. who know it from experiencing, what, according to scripture, none who are true believers can imagine they have experienced. If Mr Wesley declares in his cool judgment, and in the presence of the most high God, that he believes the mystic writers to be one great Antichrist, for so zealously inculcating a refined way of trusting to our own works and righteousness ||; what claim can he have to genuine Christianity, whose professed experience gives God the lie? "Say I these things as a man, or faith not the law the same also?" It is a deadly charity that flatters men with a persuasion that they are in the way of life, whom scripture pronounces in the way of destruction. And neither Mr Wesley's seeming strictness of behaviour, nor the miracles by which he alledges God has sometimes attested his mission, will justify those who

\* Ib. p. 31.      † Ib. p. 32.

‡ Journal from his embarking for Georgia to his return to London, ad edition, p. 70.      || Journal from 1st Feb. p. 27.

§ Indeed he does it with no small caution and address. He observes, *Letter to the Bishop of Gloucester*, p. 78, that no wise man can desire or expect miracles, to prove doctrines that have been proved by scripture and reason; or facts that have been proved by testimony; or these self-evident propositions, "that to change sinners from darkness to light is the work of God alone;" and "that such a change wrought in so many notorious

who forget the cautions of the wise man, *Prov.* xix. 27.

" Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err  
" from the words of knowledge," and *Prov.* xiv. 12.

" There

" rious sinners, in so short a time, is a great and extraordinary  
" work of God." Yet miracles, though unnecessary, he thinks  
have been wrought.

*Ib.* p. 65.—69. "But if miracles are not ceased, why do you not  
prove your mission thereby?" As your Lordship has frequently  
spoke to this effect, I will now give a clear answer. And I purpose-  
ly do it, in the same words which I published many years since.

" I. I have in some measure explained myself on the head of  
miracles, in the third part of the *Farther Appeal*. But since you  
repeat the demand, (though without taking any notice of the  
arguments there advanced), I will endeavour once more to give  
you a distinct, full, and determinate answer. And, first, I acknow-  
ledge, that I have seen with my eyes, and heard with my ears,  
several things, which, to the best of my judgment cannot be ac-  
counted for, by the ordinary course of *natural causes*; and which,  
I therefore believe, ought to be ascribed to the extraordinary inter-  
position of God. If any man chuse to style these miracles, I reclaim  
not. I have diligently inquired into the facts. I have weighed  
the preceding and following circumstances. I have strove to ac-  
count for them in a *natural way*, but could not, without doing  
violence to my reason. Not to go far back, I am clearly per-  
suaded, that the sudden deliverance of *John Haydon* was one in-  
stance of this kind, and my own recovery on *May* the 10th,  
another. I cannot account for either of these in a *natural way*;  
therefore I believe they were both *supernatural*.

" I must, secondly, observe, that the truth of these facts is  
supported by the same kind of proof, as that of all other facts is  
wont to be, namely, the testimony of competent witnesses; and  
that the testimony here, is in as high a degree as any reasonable  
man can desire. Those witnesses were many in number: they  
could not be deceived themselves; for the fact in question they  
saw with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears... Nor  
is it credible, that so many of them would combine together  
with a view of deceiving others; the greater part being men  
who feared God, as appeared by the general tenor of their  
lives. Thus in the case of *Jo. Haydon*: this thing was not con-  
trived and executed in a corner, and in the presence of his own  
family only, or three or four persons prepared for the purpose.  
No; it was in an open street in the city of *Bristol*, at one or two  
in the afternoon. And the doors being open from the beginning,  
not only many of the neighbours, from every side, but several  
others (indeed whosoever desired it) went in, till the house could  
contain no more. Nor yet does the account of my own illness  
and recovery depend, as you suppose, on *my bare word*. There  
were many witnesses both of my disorder on *Friday* and *Saturday*,  
and,

" There is a way which seemeth right unto a man ; but  
" the end thereof are the ways of death."

If

and my lying down most part of *Sunday*, (a thing they were well satisfied could not be the effect of a slight indisposition) ; and all who saw me that evening plainly discerned (what I could not wholly conceal) that I was in pain : about two hundred of whom were present, when I was seized with the cough, which cut me short, so that I could speak no more ; till I cried aloud, " Lord, increase my faith : Lord, confirm the word of thy grace." The same persons saw and heard, that at that instant I changed my posture, and broke out into thanksgiving : that quickly after I stood upright, (which I could not before), and shewed no sign either of sickness or pain.

" Yet I must desire you well to observe, thirdly, that my will, or choice, or desire, had no place either in this, or any case of this kind, that has ever fallen under my notice. Five minutes before I had no thought of this. I expected nothing less. I was willing to wait for a gradual recovery, in the ordinary use of outward means. I did not look for any other cure, till the moment before I found it. And it is my belief, that the case was always the same with regard to the most *real and undoubted miracles*. I believe God never interposed his miraculous power, but according to his own sovereign will : not according to the will of man ; neither of him by whom he wrought, nor of any other man whatsoever. The wisdom, as well as the power, are his : nor can I find that ever, from the beginning of the world, he lodged this power in any mere man, to be used whenever that man saw good. Suppose, therefore, there was a man now upon earth, who did work *real and undoubted miracles* ; I would ask, by whose power doth he work these ? and at whose pleasure ? His own, or God's ? Not his own ; but God's. But if so, then your demand is made not on man, but on God. I cannot say it is modest, thus to challenge God ; or well-suiting the relation of a creature to his Creator.

" 2. However, I cannot but think, there have been already so many interpositions of divine power, as will shortly leave you without excuse, if you either deny or despise them. We desire no favour ; but the justice that diligent inquiry may be made concerning them. We are ready to name the persons on whom the power was shewn, which belongeth to none but God, (not one or two, or ten or twelve only) ; to point out their places of abode : and we engage, they shall answer every pertinent question, fairly and directly ; and, if required, shall give all these answers upon oath, before any who are impowered to receive them. It is our particular request, that the circumstances which went before, which accompanied, and which followed after the facts under consideration, may be thoroughly examined, and punctually noted down. Let but this be done, (and is it not highly needful it should, at least by those who would form an exact judgment !), and

If any suspect that I have given unfair extracts or abridgments of Mr Wesley's writings, they may, at a very small expence of time and money, compare my references with

and we have no fear that any reasonable man should scruple to say, *This hath God wrought.*

"As there have been already so many instances of this kind, far beyond what we dared to ask, or think, I cannot take upon me to say, whether or no it will please God to add to their number. I have not herein known the mind of the Lord, neither am I his counsellor. He may, or he may not; I cannot affirm or deny. I have no light, and I have no desire either way. It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good. I desire only to be as clay in his hand."

Bishop Warburton's *Doctrine of Grace*, and Mr Wesley's *Letter to the Bishop*, refer to many passages in Mr Wesley's *Journals* concerning his alleged miracles. I find no instances among them of raiing the dead, giving sight to those born blind, &c. And though there are many accounts of remarkable recoveries from sickness, extraordinary deliverances, judgments on scoffers or apostates, and pretended dispossession of devils; yet the circumstances of some of these accounts do not exclude a possibility of imposture, and the rest may be fairly ascribed to Providence, not miraculously exerted to attest the truth of a doctrine, but co-operating with ordinary, natural, or moral causes. God's approbation or disapprobation cannot be safely concluded from extraordinary deliverances, or sudden and unusual calamities. These things come alike to all men. Besides a party may be justly censurable, though judgments fall on men who scoff at it, or forsake it, for appearances of piety and strictness, and not for any thing really amis.

There is cause to suspect Mr Wesley may have exaggerated facts that tend to the honour of his party, from his rashness in asserting falsehoods to the disparagement of others. *Journal from 16th Feb. 1755, to 16th June 1758*, p. 17, speaking of the causes why the religious concern in Scotland and New England has been of shorter continuance than that in England under the Methodist teachers, he says "It does not become us to judge peremptorily: but perhaps some of them may be these. 1. Many of them became wise in their own eyes. They seemed to think they were the men, and there were none like them: and hence they refused God the liberty of sending by whom he would send, and required him to work by men of learning, or not at all. 2. Many of them were bigots, immoderately attached either to their own opinions or modes of worship. Mr Edwards himself was not clear of this. But the Scotch bigots were beyond all others; placing Arminianism (so called) on a level with Deism, and the church of England with that of Rome. Hence they not only suffered in themselves and their brethren a bitter zeal, but applauded themselves therein, in shewing the same spirit agaist all who differed from them, as the Papists did against our forefathers,

with the passages in the books themselves, of all which there are copies in Mr Gray's circulating library, except of the sermon on free grace, which he has also commissioned, and hopes to procure.

Thus I have gone through a very disagreeable drudgery, in charity to multitudes in danger of being misled. The debt I owe to my congregation and family, and the desire of leisure for purposes which I hope may better promote the interests of religion, forbid me to launch further in this species of charity. If more of it should be needed, I hope my brethren of different denominations, who think as I do in this matter, will not judge it reasonable that they should be altogether eased, and I only burdened. Had Mr Wesley been fair and open in declaring his sentiments; had his errors been of little importance; or had there

forefathers. 3. With pride, bitterness, and bigotry, self-indulgence was joined: self-denial was little taught and practised. 'Tis well if some of them did not despise or even condemn all self-denial in things indifferent, as in apparel or food, as nearly allied to Popery. No marvel then that the Spirit of God was grieved."

The chief instruments of the revival in New England thought, that abstaining from the moderate use of tobacco was a slender part of religion, if any part of it at all. And they testified against lay-exhorters, visions, dreams, impressions on the imagination, &c. by all which, Mr Wesley thinks the work of God in England has been carried on. On what else the above charge is founded I know not, as they were men eminent for their humility, catholic charity, and self-denial. As to the instruments of the revival in Scotland, the names of the late Mr M'Lawrie at Glasgow, Robe at Kilsyth, Warden at Calder, Burnside at Kirkintilloch; Mackie then at St Ninians, Warden then at Camsie, not to mention others who yet survive, are a sufficient confutation of it. None of them were Arminians or Episcopals: but where was the man among them who placed Arminianism on a level with Deism, or the church of England with that of Rome?

In examining the regard due to Mr Wesley's miracles, it would not be amiss to consult our L O R D ' s warning, Matth. xxiv. 23.—26. " Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there: " believe it not. For there shall arise false christ's, and false " prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch " that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect. " Behold I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say " unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth: behold, " he is in the secret chambers, believe it not.

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been no appearance of his gaining an influence, which might enable him gradually to introduce them, I would not probably have employed any part of a life, of which so much is already spent, and the remainder so uncertain, in writing on this subject. Inaccuracies of style the candid will forgive; as I only received Mr Kershaw's pamphlet the first of this month, and different engagements have demanded most of my hours ever since, and often have permitted me only to write a line or two at a time. As to my facts and reasonings, I am not conscious there is need of any apology.

*Edinburgh,*  
*July 20. 1765.*

### *E R R A T A & A D D E N D A.*

*P. 2. l. 10, 11. for rules against, read sermon answered by.*

*P. 11. l. 14. from the foot, for act the, read the act.*

*P. 25. l. 13. l. 4. after doctrinal artieles? insert, What have I said of any of his present opinions more severe than what he himself says of one of them? Journal from 12th August 1738 to 1st Nov. 1739. p. 75. "When will ye understand, that the most destructive of all those errors, which Rome, the mother of abominations, hath brought forth, (compared to which transubstantiation, and a hundred more, are trifles light as air), is, that we are justified by works, or, (to express the same thing a little more decently), by faith and works."*

*P. 26. l. 1. in some copies, for inability, read ability.*

*P. 35. l. 19. after the words against God, insert The great good of which he imagines the Moravians have been instruments or occasions, has not prevented him from saying, Journal from 25th Nov. 1746 to 20th July 1750, p. 110. "Having procured a sight of that amazing compound of nonsense and blasphemy, the last hymn-book published by Count Zinzendorf's brethren, I believe it was my bounden duty to transcribe a few of those wonderful hymns, and publish them to all the world, as a standing proof, that there is no folly too gross for those who are wise above what is written."*

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# A S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D B E F O R E

The Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale,

At *Edinburgb, November 8. 1763.*

2 CORINTHIANS, vi. 3.

*Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.*

THESE words describe the behaviour of Paul, and of Timothy, his beloved son in the faith; and are intended, not only to do justice to their character, but to present gospel-ministers, in all ages, a fair pattern to copy after, if they would prosper in their arduous work. The conduct of these excellent men was, in the main, so circumspect and exemplary, that it could give no just cause of offence to Jews, to Gentiles, or to the churches of Christ. They carefully avoided whatever might increase the prejudices of unbelievers against the gospel, or might impair the reputation and success of their ministry, by laying a stumbling-block, or occasion of offence, in their brother's way.

I intend, in discoursing on this passage, first to explain the duty of giving no offence; then to inculcate upon myself and my brethren in the ministry the prac-

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tice of that duty; and, lastly, to conclude with some practical reflections on what may be delivered.

I. I am to explain the duty here recommended to ministers, *Giving no offence.*

To preach and to act so as that, in fact, none shall be offended, would indeed be a hard, or rather impossible, task. We cannot govern the sentiments and passions of others; and that can never be our duty which is wholly out of our power. The tastes of our hearers are so opposite, that what is relished by one set of them will necessarily disgust another. So changeable are the humours of not a few, that what yesterday they approved, to-morrow they condemn. The weak and captious will censure our not doing what was either impossible or unfit to be done. Not visiting the sick when we were altogether ignorant of their sickness; visiting one person oftener than another; preaching a little longer than usual, or a little shorter; insisting often on subjects of general importance, or insisting seldom on subjects of less extensive use; repeating the same sermon in different pulpits; borrowing useful observations from the compositions of others; refusing to spend that time in company, which duty requires us to devote to our studies: nay, circumstances still more insignificant than these; our parentage; our wealth; our poverty; our dress; our necessary recreations; every thing that relates to us; every thing we say or do, however innocent; every thing we omit, however needless, may, by one or other, be found fault with. To such trifles, triflers alone can constantly attend. If people will take offence

fence where no shadow of offence has been given, his soul must be groveling, and his time and pains poorly employed, who, in such low inconsiderable matters, can entirely guard against it. Even truth and holiness give offence. If any truth is contrary to generally-received opinions, many will be our enemies for telling them that truth. If vice is honestly reproved, the obstinate transgressor will be provoked. But if men take umbrage at us for doing our duty, it becomes us to offend man rather than God. When we hold on steadily in the paths of truth and righteousness, amidst these unjust reproaches, the testimony of God and of a good conscience will afford us unspeakable support and delight. The faithful minister, though reviled by an ungrateful generation, as a troubler of Israel, and a turner of the world upside down, is glorious in the eyes of the Lord. Though his character may, for a season, be under a cloud, God will at length bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day. It is evident, therefore, the duty of giving no offence, only means the giving no just cause of offence, by doing any thing unbecoming our profession as Christians, or our office as ministers of Christ. But it is proper to descend to particulars.

1. Our life and conversation should be inoffensive. Our station is elevated and conspicuous, and exposes us to the most strict and critical inspection. Many eyes are upon us, and the same allowances will not be made for our miscarriages as for those of others. Though we could speak with the tongues of men and angels, we shall hardly charm our hearers into a life

of piety, and convince them that religion is beautiful, unless we exhibit her beauties in a regular well-ordered conversation. A dissolute life cannot fail to make us base in the sight of the people. When our practice is manifestly inconsistent with our doctrines, the brightest parts will not protect our character, the finest accomplishments will not screen us from deserved reproach.

Nor is it enough, that we are not chargeable with scandalous wickedness. If we indulge ourselves in practices of a suspicious nature; venture to the utmost bounds of what is lawful; needlessly frequent the company of scoffers at religion; or, at least, spend more of our leisure-hours with the gay and thoughtless, than with sober serious Christians; if our conduct indicates a crafty, political, intriguing spirit; if we discover no relish for retirement; are often and unnecessarily in the tavern, seldom in the closet; and reserve little of our time for reading, meditation, and prayer; if a word scarce ever drops from us in ordinary conversation, that can either instruct or edify, we transgresst the precept of giving no offence. With whatever force of argument, and seeming warmth, we recommend from the pulpit heavenly-mindedness and devotion, humility, self-denial, weanedness from the world, uprightness and integrity, the careful improvement of time, and a tender circumspect life, few who observe our behaviour will be charitable, or rather, will be blind enough, to fancy us in earnest. The judicious will shrewdly suspect that pleasure, gain, or honour, is dearer to us than God's glory and the salvation of souls. Good men will be offended; and even bad

men,

## A G A I N S T   G I V I N G   O F F E N C E. 3

men, whatever they pretend, will, in their hearts, despise us. We move in a more exalted sphere than others; and if we would shine as lights of the world, had need to avoid every appearance of evil, and to consider well, not only what is just and pure, but what is lovely and of good report. The world expects that we should do honour to our profession, act up to the dignity of our character, and, with the great apostle of the Gentiles, magnify our office, by acquiring, cultivating, and exercising every accomplishment, gift, and grace, that tends to promote our usefulness in the church of Christ. Many things, abstractly considered, may be lawful, which yet are not expedient, and edify not. Duty indeed sometimes obliges us to contradict the humours of our people. But it is neither acting a wise nor a good part to contradict them for contradiction's sake. In matters indifferent, we should become all things to all men, that we may gain the more; and deny ourselves the use of our lawful liberty, when, by indulging it, our brother would be stumbled, or offended, or made weak.

2. We should give no offence by chusing injudiciously the subjects of our sermons. When we preach what is the result of mere human reason, or teach for doctrines the commandments of men; when we urge uncertain speculations as warmly as if salvation depended on the belief of them; puzzle our hearers with new schemes unsupported by scripture-evidence, or, by forced unnatural interpretations, torture the inspired writings to speak our mind; when the things we teach, though possibly true in themselves, yet are not important religious truths, explained and inforced

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## 6 MINISTERS CAUTIONED

in a scriptural strain : we practically declare, by such a conduct, that we have no high esteem for divine revelation, and have forgot our commission as ambassadors of Christ. It would be reckoned arrogant presumption, even in the ambassador of an earthly prince, should he exceed his instructions, and betake himself to his own sagacity, in adjusting the differences of his sovereign with neighbouring states. And can an ambassador commissioned by him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, be thus unfaithful, without the most daring and impious insolence ? He bids fairest to preach with success, who preaches in words, not of man's wisdom, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. The blessed Spirit sets his seal only to doctrines stamped with his own authority, and which flow from that sacred fountain unfullied and pure. The gospel, when mingled with human inventions, loses much of its native lustre, and, like adulterated milk, affords but scanty and unwholesome nourishment. An itch to say what is curious and uncommon, is a dangerous turn of mind in a teacher of Christianity. Common truths are like common blessings ; of most use, and of truest worth : and that is the best sermon which makes the grace of God sweet, salvation through Christ acceptable, sin ugly and hateful, and holiness amiable to the soul.

If they give just ground of offence who add to the word of God, they do it also who take from it. All God's words are right. There is nothing froward or perverse in them. Every doctrine and precept is wisely suited to promote God's glory and man's salvation,

## AGAINST GIVING OFFENCE. 7

tion, and was mercifully revealed for that very purpose. All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Those entertain too high a conceit of their own penetration, and very mean ideas of the divine wisdom, who fancy it dangerous to preach what the blessed Spirit judged it proper to reveal. If we would keep back from our people nothing profitable, we must endeavour to declare to them the whole counsel of God. Concealing any part of that form of sound words which our commission directs us to publish, is unfaithfulness to God, and injustice to the souls of men. "He," saith God, "that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully;" Jer. xxiii. 28. And again: "—all the words that I command thee to speak unto them, diminish not a word;" Jer. xxvi. 2.

As wise and faithful stewards, we must regard the whole family, and give to every one his proper portion: teaching the young and ignorant, in a plain familiar manner, the first principles of the oracles of God; and dispensing strong meat to them of full age, who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. The erroneous, we must endeavour, by sound reasoning, to convince of their mistakes. We must unfold the strictness, spirituality, and extent of God's law; and display the awful sanctions that inforce it, to rouse from their spiritual lethargy, the secure and thoughtless, the bold and presumptuous, the proud and self-confident: awakened souls we must gently allure to Christ, by the sweet and free invitations of the gospel; and believers we must

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must exhort, by a faithful discharge of every duty, to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

Perhaps it is one chief occasion of our giving offence, by not declaring the whole counsel of God, that there are certain subjects peculiarly easy and agreeable to us, which, on that account, we are apt to imagine the most important, and to insist upon the most frequently. Lecturing usually on large portions of scripture might be some remedy to this evil. Occasions would, in that way, soon present, of explaining every doctrine, and inculcating every duty. Both we and our hearers would grow better acquainted with the lively oracles, and learn to read them more profitably. Besides, short occasional hints, which naturally arise in our ordinary course of expounding a gospel or epistle, may fall with weight on our hearers ere they are aware, and force conviction. Whereas, when the subject of a sermon is directly levelled against vulgar prejudices or fashionable vices, instantly the alarm is taken, and the mind strengthens itself against evidence. The heart is a fort more easily taken by sap than by storm.

But though we give hints of every truth, our sermons will offend the judicious, if we insist most frequently and earnestly on subjects of lesser importance, and more sparingly and coldly on those branches of Christianity which are most frequently introduced, and have the greatest stress laid upon them, in the sacred writings. Our great business is, to instruct guilty creatures how they may be recovered from the ruins of their apostasy, serve God acceptably here, and enjoy him for ever hereafter. It is justly offensive, if we content ourselves

ourselves with now and then mentioning, in a slight and overly manner, those things which affect the very vitals of our common Christianity.

If Christ, and salvation through him, are rarely preached, this will be quite opposite to the apostolic pattern. Let it not be pleaded, That these doctrines were more necessary to Jews and Heathens than to professed Christians. A little observation may convince us, that many of our hearers are Christians only in name, and need to be taught these doctrines more perfectly, or, at least, to have deeper impressions of their truth and importance. Besides, it was not barely in addressing infidels, that the apostles insisted on such subjects. They did it also in their epistles to the saints and faithful in Jesus, who knew these things, and were established in the present truth. A considerable part of many of these epistles immediately relates to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. And, in the practical part of them, these peculiar doctrines are often urged as motives even to social and relative duties. For instance, they are urged to dissuade from evil-speaking, and to recommend meekness and gentleness, Tit. iii. 2. & seqq.: and in the 8th verse of that chapter, the apostle, after pronouncing the doctrine of justification through Christ *a faithful saying*, enjoins Titus to affirm it constantly, in order to excite believers to carefulness in maintaining good works. But I have a still higher pattern to plead: More of our Lord's sermons are recorded by the beloved disciple than by the other evangelists; and of these the principal subjects are, the dangerous state of the unconverted, and the nature, necessity, and blessed

consequences of faith in Christ, of union with him, and of the sanctifying influences of his Spirit. The last and longest of these sermons, though preached to the apostles only, who had long ago professed their dependence on him as their guide to eternal life, yet chiefly relates to the mutual love of Christ and his people, and the safety and comfort that flow from the exercise of faith in him. The doctrine of Christ crucified is the instituted mean for producing and nourishing the divine life, and should be the centre of our sermons, in reference to, and dependence upon which, other subjects ought to be considered.

"The nature of true religion, as distinguished from every counterfeit appearance, the genuine workings of it in the heart, and the fruits of it in the life, are subjects that need to be often explained and inculcated. Scripture abounds with occasional instructions on these heads: and the 119th psalm, our Lord's sermon on the mount, the epistle of James, and John's first epistle, treat them designedly, and at full length. On the one hand, we must inculcate it frequently, that however blameless mens outward conduct appear, yet if they act barely from selfish interested principles, and have not charity, love to God, to Christ, and to their brethren of mankind, they are nothing, have not the spirit of Christ in them, and are none of his: " The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." In other words, The end of divine revelation is not gained upon us, till we love our duty, see a beauty and excellency in holiness, and esteem it our meat and drink to do the will of our heavenly Father. On the other hand,

hand, we must remind our hearers, that where the tree is good, the fruit also will be good; and that no pretences to faith or love are well founded, which do not justify themselves by a suitable practice. Nor must we content ourselves with general encomiums on holiness and good works. It is necessary minutely to describe the various graces of the Spirit that constitute the Christian temper, and the various duties we owe to God, our neighbours, and ourselves. We do not comply with the precepts of the apostles, and imitate their example, in speaking the things that become sound doctrine, unless we inculcate upon our hearers the particular obligations that result from their different ages, stations, and relations; Tit. ii. 1. 2. For vice, as well as error, is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God; 1 Tim. i. 9.—11.

Further, we give offence, if we do not insist on subjects suited to the spiritual state of our flocks, and to the dispensations of providence towards them. In many discourses, the counsel is good, but not for the time. Whereas, a well-timed discourse bids fairest to strike and edify. There is also a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak. In many cases, we will instruct and admonish in vain, if we stay not till mens minds are calm, composed, and in proper temper to give us a fair hearing. Paul would not feed with strong meat those who were not able to bear it. On some occasions, an oblique hint will irritate more than a severe undisguised reproof would do at another season.

It is evident, from what has been said, that the mat-

ter of his sermons must needs give offence, whose ideas of the great truths of Christianity are superficial, confused, and indistinct. Men must have knowledge ere they impart it ; and there is one only source whence divine knowledge, without danger of mistake, can be derived, and where it is the duty and interest of the minister of Christ, with the utmost diligence, to dig for it. Let the writings of philosophers, of historians, and of politicians, be their study whose business it is to unfold the secrets of nature, to transmit to posterity the memorable deeds of heroes, or to give counsel to their sovereign in matters of state. These branches of knowledge are at best ornamental, not essential, to a teacher of Christianity. He may innocently, nay, usefully, amuse himself with them; but he cannot, without sacrilege, devote to them the greatest part of his time. His office is, to make known to perishing sinners the sublime, the affecting, the comforting truths of the lively oracles ; and for that end, attentively to read them, to meditate on them day and night ; and whilst he despises not the labours of able and worthy men, who have endeavoured to illustrate them, to secure a better and more effectual help, by humbly and fervently imploring the Father of lights, to open his eyes to behold wondrous things out of God's word. Thus shall he become a scribe instructed into the kingdom of God, and, like unto a man that is an householder, bring forth out of his treasures things new and old.

3. When ministers give no offence by the subjects of their sermons, they may give a great deal by their manner of handling them. Particularly,

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When they preach not in a manner calculated to inform the judgment. Men are rational creatures, and, if we would address them as such, the understanding should, as the leading power, be first applied to. For this purpose, we must clearly open and explain the truth, confirm it by arguments level to the capacities of our hearers, and do all this in plain familiar language, which even those in low life may easily understand. Christianity was designed for the peasant as well as the philosopher. And, as the learned and wise make a small proportion of most congregations, to preach it in a way in which only they are like to be the better for it, is highly offensive. Philosophy, though from the prefs it has done religion substantial service ; yet, when often introduced in the pulpit, generally hurts it, by usurping the place of what would be more useful, and probably more acceptable too. Scholastical niceties, metaphysical distinctions, and a fine subtle thread of reasoning, may indeed sometimes be necessary in answering metaphysical objections against religion ; and therefore, on some rare occasions, the use of them in the pulpit may be profitable. But the bulk of audiences are incapable of following a long and intricate train of thought ; and therefore will be confounded by it, not instructed and convinced. While some may applaud such sermons as deep and rational, the more wise will despise them as idle and injudicious. This, however, is no apology for any who verge to the opposite extreme, slight order and exactness in their compositions, and, instead of keeping close to a subject, entertain their hearers with confused incoherent discourses, empty  
of

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of sentiment, but full of insipid repetitions, and impertinent rambling excursions.

I say nothing of those, whose long perplexed periods, occasioned by unnecessary epithets and expletives, and parentheses, and digressions, render their sermons at once tedious and obscure. This unhappiness of style is remarkable in some who stand in the first rank of genius and penetration; who exerting thought more intensely than others, had little attention to spare for expression. Their fault is more voluntary, and therefore more offensive, who by a false affectation of the elegant or the sublime, soar aloft, above the comprehension of their hearers. Bombast descriptions, glittering flowers of eloquence, and luxuriant flights of wit, had better be left to the heroes of romance\*. Sermons composed in such a style, may indeed entertain and amuse; but they want perspicuity, the very first and fundamental excellency of speech. Even the justest metaphors, when too much crowded, enervate a discourse; darken, instead of illustrating, the sense; and, to use the words of another, resemble the windows in old cathedrals, in which the painting keeps out the light. I acknowledge, the best sentiments, if conveyed in mean and low images, and cloathed in a rustic slovenly dress, provoke laughter in some, and occasion uneasiness in others: but we need not run into a finical nicety of style, in order to avoid a sordid negligence.

\* Hervey of the church of England, and Macewen of the Secession, are agreeable writers. But to attempt their manner is dangerous, without an uncommonly lively imagination, solid judgment, and correct taste. Luxuriancies of style, generally overlooked in original geniuses, appear ridiculous in their servile imitators.

## A GAINST GIVING OFFENCE. 1

Still more offensive than these, is an obscurity affected for its own sake. It must offend every honest man, if, to conceal unpopular opinions, and to put on an air of orthodoxy, we use expressions which may be interpreted, with equal ease, to divers, and even contrary purposes. Remarkable are the words of Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 9. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak to the air." If this is a good argument against preaching in an unknown tongue, it is equally good against every thing else that disguises, instead of unfolding our sentiments of Christianity. The apostles used great plainness of speech; and it is an apostolical injunction, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Let his style be plain and clear, like that of the sacred writings; not dark and ambiguous, like the oracles of the Heathen \*.

After all, informing the judgment, though the first part of our work, is far from the whole of it. Sermons will do little service, if they are not also calculated to command a reverend attention, to strike the conscience, and to warm and affect the heart. We speak as ministers of God; and therefore it becomes us to speak with dignity and boldness, not fearing the face of man. Favour should not bribe, nor frowns nor dangers af-

\* It was justly observed of the council of Trent, "Nostri artificia horum hominum; vix unquam aliquid aperte dicunt, vix unquam simpliciter: et cum ceteri homines loquuntur ut intelligi possint, isti nihil magis volunt quam ne intelligantur." *Pibraci epistola ad Hospitalium, apud Courayer, in notis ad Fr. Pauli hist. Conc. Trid. t. i. p. 368. edit. Lond.* Too many Protestants have imitated them in this.

fright

fright us, from delivering our master's message. I mean not to vindicate pride or passion. A proper decorum should be observed, especially in administering reproof. It is not fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked, or to princes, Ye are ungodly. Persons in public characters must be treated with a deference suited to their station; and even the meanest must not be insulted. Courage, however, and faithfulness, are by no means inconsistent with meekness and discretion. And if the greatest dare grossly and openly to transgress, the minister of Christ should dare to reprove.

Besides the meanness of some, in conniving at fashionable vices, there are others, whose thoughtless unconcerned gesture and pronunciation greatly diminish the dignity of their pulpit-performances, and make them received with indifference, perhaps indignation, instead of respect. A light and merry air, an antic jovial carriage, in executing the weighty commission with which God has intrusted us, is contrary to the rules of decency, and cannot fail to prejudice the hearers. It is impossible to be too grave and serious in addresses, on the success of which the happiness of immortal souls in so great a measure depends.

But though our language is plain and elegant, our method accurate, and our manner grave and solemn; yet, if our discourses are flat and lifeless, they will seldom warm the heart. Mr Melmoth has observed, that in Archbishop Tillotson's sermons, a pathetic animated address is often wanting, even on occasions when naturally we would have expected most of it. Abundance of spirit, however, appears in some of his discourses, especially in exposing the absurdities and impieties

## AGAINST GIVING OFFENCE. 17

impieties of the church of Rome. And it might have been remarked with equal justice, that numerous volumes of sermons published in England since that time, while inferior to the Archbishop's in many genuine beauties of style, resemble them only in that languid manner of which Melmoth complains. Alas ! my brethren, dull and pointless arrows are ill suited to pierce the conscience of hardened sinners. Soft and drowsy harangues, instead of rousing a secure generation, will rather increase their spiritual lethargy ; and a cold preacher will soon have a cold auditory. Jesus has intrusted us with the concerns of his people, a people dearly bought, and greatly beloved ; we have to do with souls, that must be happy or miserable for ever ; we address them, in the name of God, upon matters of infinite importance : and is it not an indignity to him whose ambassadors we are, to execute our commission coolly, and as if half asleep ? Will it not tempt others to slight our message, if, by the manner of delivering it, we appear to slight it ourselves ? When our own hearts are most impressed with the inestimable worth of immortal souls ; when out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ; when our sentiments, style, voice, and gesture, discover how much we are in earnest ; then we are most likely to touch the hearts of our hearers, and make them feel the force of what we say.

I have said so much upon preaching, as there are more directions and exhortations in scripture with relation to it than with relation to any other branch of our office, I must barely hint the remaining particu-

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lars, lest I incroach too far on your time and patience.

4. We may give offence, not only by an improper manner of preaching, but by a neglect or undue performance of the other public offices of our station.

In leading the devotions of the church, we give offence, when either the matter, expression, or manner, is unsuitable; when we are long and tedious; mingle our own passions and prejudices with our addresses to God; introduce disputable matters, in which many sincere Christians cannot join with us; when we adapt not our prayers to the particular circumstances and necessities of our people; hurry them over carelessly; discover no becoming seriousness and solemnity of spirit, no realizing sense of the value of the blessings for which we plead; and when we seem to forget that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, through whom alone our guilty race can obtain access to God, and acceptance with him.

It is just cause of offence, and, did vital piety flourish, would be offensive to our people, that the Lord's supper is so seldom dispensed. And as our manner of dispensing that ordinance is one chief hindrance of its frequency, it is worthy our inquiry, how far that also is blameable. Undoubtedly we give offence, if, for trifling unwarrantable causes, we put off administering it; or if we usurp the prerogative of Christ, as sole lawgiver of the church, by making the terms of Christian communion either wider or narrower than he has made them.

And this leads me to observe, that as the discipline of the church is in part committed to us, we give offence if we exercise it with respect of persons; and, through

through a mistaken tenderness for any, or a fear of incurring their displeasure, allow them to live without due censure, in the open practice of scandalous crimes, instead of rebuking them with authority, that others also may fear. At the same time, we give offence, if we claim a right to judge them that are without. It is an offence against common sense, to expel men from a society to which they never seemed to belong, and to debar them from privileges, to which they never had, or pretended to have, any title.

Probably some or other might be offended, and none greatly edified, should I say much on our conduct in judicatures. Of this subject much has been said from the pulpit, and, on occasions too, where no purpose of edification could be gained by saying any thing. This much, however, may, I hope, be said, without impropriety, on such an occasion : To act a juggling unsteady part, and, from connections of any kind, to vary from our professed principles; to sneak, and cringe, and prostitute our consciences, either to the humours of the great, or to the prejudices of the populace; to behave with insolence to men our superiors in age and experience; to listen with avidity to one side of a question, while we deny a fair and full hearing to the other; to silence sober reasoning by raillery, by dark malicious inquendoes, by bitter satirical invectives, or by noisy cries for a vote; to treat one another with harshness and severity for different sentiments and different conduct in matters of doubtful disputation, cannot fail to offend every cool and impartial observer. Nor can it, I think, be disputed, that we give offence, if we examine slightly the op-

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nions, dispositions, and abilities of those we recommend to important offices; and solemnly attest, that men have qualifications, which either we know that they want, or at least know not that they have.

In ordaining to the ministry, we act in the name of Christ; and therefore give offence if we act against his authority, or without it. Genius, learning, prudence, aptness to teach, are all necessary parts of furniture for a minister; and, in ordinary cases, without some measure of them, none ought to be set apart to that honourable service. But the most eminent gifts and abilities, when grace does not direct the proper use of them, may too probably qualify men to be plagues instead of blessings to the church of God. Jesus would not commit his sheep to Peter, till he had answered satisfactorily the question, " Lovest thou me?" He who knows all things, knew the love of his disciple; and therefore thus inquired, chiefly for our sakes, that in committing to others the ministry of reconciliation, we should follow his steps. They who have seen Christ's beauty, tasted his love, and felt the pleasures and advantages of religion, are peculiarly qualified, by this their Christian experience, to recommend them to others with dignity and freedom. Singular activity is requisite in the many labours, and singular fortitude and firmness of mind in the many difficulties and afflictions to which faithful ministers are exposed. Now, love, and love alone, will reconcile to these; nay, render them a delight. Untender, therefore, and unkind, we are to the feeble flock of Christ, if we commit them to men who, for aught we know or care, bear them no affection; and probably, instead of

feeding

feeding and defending them, may poison them, or expose them to be devoured. None will presume thus to plead before Christ in the great day of account :  
“ It is true, we intrusted souls, dear in thy sight, and  
“ for whom thou didst shed thy precious blood, to one  
“ whose conduct seemed to discover, that his natural  
“ enmity to thee remained unsubdued. But he was  
“ an agreeable companion, a man of strong natural  
“ powers, and an accomplished orator.” If such a  
plea would be absurd, must not that conduct be absurd  
which requires it? We are not indeed to seek, for we  
cannot obtain, an absolute certainty that those we ordain are lovers of Jesus. It is God’s prerogative to  
search the heart ; and the judgment we form, on the  
most probable evidence, may prove wrong. But it is  
enough to warrant our act, if there is a profession of  
real religion, and an outward conduct in some measure  
agreeable to that profession : and, without doubt,  
different sentiments of a candidate, and different opportunities of knowing him thoroughly, may justify  
some in bearing a part in his ordination, when it would  
be in others presumptuous wickedness. There is one  
thing more in our ordinations, which, I think, merits  
our serious attention ; and that is, the solemnly giving  
to one, in the name of Jesus, the charge of a congrega-  
tion unwilling to submit to him, and among whom  
there is no probability of his usefulness\*. Upon what  
principles this can be vindicated, I am yet to learn.

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\* The zeal of Passius, canon of Valentia, out-ran his knowledge, when he maintained in the council of Trent, That it was a devilish pestilent invention of late heretics, destructive of faith and of the church

The state must no doubt determine what shall be the established religion, and who shall be intitled to the legal benefice for teaching it: but no government ought, and our government does not attempt, to impose upon any, either a religion or an instructor in religion. It is still more difficult to conceive, why a conscientious scruple to bear a part in an ordination, the form of which seems to assert a falsehood, should exclude a man, otherwise qualified, from serving God in the gospel of his Son. I have seen no act of parliament, or constitution of the church of Scotland, that enjoins this. Sure I am, it is not enjoined by Christian forbearance and love.

5. We give offence, by the neglect or undue performance of the more private duties of our calling.

If we pay no regard to the souls of our charge, unless in the pulpit, and immediate preparation for it; if we seem indifferent how we stand in the esteem and affection of our people, or what is the success of our labours; if we use not every proper method for conveying and cherishing religious impressions, for preventing backslidings, and for recovering those that have fallen, from their spiritual decays; if we neglect to warn the unruly, to comfort them that mourn, to

church of God, to ascribe to any claim of right the voice or consent allowed the people in the choice of their pastors; which was a mere favour, revocable at pleasure. Yet he certainly argued consistently, in insisting, that those passages should be expunged from the pontifical, which seem to suppose such consent necessary; particularly where the bishop says, in ordaining a presbyter, " Non frustra a patribus institutum, ut de electione eorum qui ad regimen altaris adhibendi sunt, consulatur et populus; quia necesse est, ut facilius ei quis obediens iam exhibeat ordinato, cui assensum præbuerit ordinando."

visit

visit the afflicted, and to catechize the young and ignorant, when we have any probable prospect that these services may be useful ; or if we manage our visits to the sick so uncautiously, that bystanders are encouraged to put off thoughts of repentance to their last moments, and thereby sustain a hurt which any good done to the dying will seldom balance ; we greatly fail of our duty, and are guilty of giving offence.

## II. I now proceed briefly to inforce the exhortation of giving no offence.

The text itself suggests a powerful argument : If we give offence, the ministry will be blamed. The people of God will justly be angry with us, and condemn our faulty conduct. Nay, possibly, all our future ministrations will, in their eyes, become hateful or contemptible ; and thus a fair prospect of usefulness be unhappily blasted. Though a man could speak like an oracle, little regard will be paid to what he says when his credit is sunk.

Nor is this the worst : the ungodly confine not their censures to the weak or worthless minister ; but, as though one clergyman stood representative of all, take occasion, from his licentiousness or imprudence, to traduce ministers in general as fools or knaves. In every place there are subtle emissaries of Satan, who incessantly watch for our halting, and take a handle, from the least misbehaviour of which we are guilty, to reflect on the most innocent of our brethren. The enemies of Jesus are fond of every thing that can expose our order : and if our conduct is profligate, or our pulpit-compositions despicable, that affords them

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the wished-for pretext to gratify their malice. The cry is, They are all alike. Nay, it is well if the sacred office itself be not aspersed, and the wisdom of God who instituted it arraigned. . Thus, when we depart out of the way, it causes many to stumble at the law, and to abhor the offering of the Lord. Jesus himself is crucified afresh, and his holy religion reproached through our faults, unjustly imputed to them. We are ambassadors for Christ; and by our ill management of that trust, disgrace is reflected on him in whose name we act, the cause of God suffers, the hearts of the godly are grieved, the wicked are hardened in their wickedness, and precious souls eternally perish. Wo to the world because of offences. It must needs be that offences come ; but wo to the man, double wo to the minister, by whom they come : it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the depths of the sea. Though his heavenly Master, who invested him with so honourable an office, is present, and observes his conduct, he dares to be indolent in his service, and basely to betray his interest. He scruples not the most direct and horrible perjury, by violating the solemn engagements he came under, to take heed to the flock of which he was ordained an overseer. He feels no remorse for offending the Sovereign of Zion, by a neglect of duty, and a breach of trust, which, in his own servant, or in the servant of an earthly sovereign, would have appeared to him infamous and detestable. But possibly, when death is about to seal the eyes of his body, the eyes of his soul may be opened to perceive things as they really are. After having spent his life

life in doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, and pursuing the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, not the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, methinks I see him receive the awful summons; Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou must be no longer steward: He feels himself about to be dragged to a state of misery, eternal and intolerable. Conscience awakes from its fatal slumber, and by the most cruel and unsupportable reproaches, avenges his contempt of its old and long-forgotten remonstrances. His wonted arts of stilling this inward tormentor, now lose their power. Fearfulness and trembling come upon him, and horror overwhelms him. Hell is as naked before him, and destruction without a covering. And God, justly provoked, laughs at his calamity, and mocks when his fear cometh. Yet, possibly, another, equally unfaithful, may have no bonds in his death, and leave this world as he lived in it, thoughtless of God and duty, and regardless of eternity. But if dying does not, surely death shall put an end to his peace. See him appearing before the tribunal of a now inexorable judge. Behold his countenance changed, his thoughts troubling him, the joints of his loins loosed, and his knees smiting one against another; when, lo ! a voice more dreadful than thunder thus accosts him : " Wicked and slothful servant, what " hadst thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou " shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth ; seeing " thou hatest instruction, and castest my words be- " hind thee ? " Mark a numerous flock ruined by his negligence or bad example. Listen to them calling for vengeance. The cry of their blood enters into the ears

of the Lord of Sabaoth ; and the irreversible doom is pronounced, " Take him, bind him hand and foot, " cast him into utter darkness ; there shall be weeping, " and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Turn away from this shocking scene, and observe on the right hand of the Son of man a faithful pastor. Possibly his dying words were words of triumph and transport : " This is my rejoicing, the testimony of " my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, " not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, " I have had my conversation in the world. I have " fought a good fight, I have finished my course, " I have kept the faith. Henceforth is laid up for " me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the " righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not " to me only, but to all them also that love his ap- " pearing." But with what superior joy does he lift up his head, when he rests from his labours, when his warfare is accomplished, and the day of his complete redemption dawns ! He walked with God in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. These he now presents to the Great Shepherd of the sheep, saying, " Behold me, and the children thou hast given me." He is their rejoicing, and they also are his rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus. Joyful to both was the sound of the gospel : but more joyful now, is the final sentence; " Well done, good and " faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few " things, I will make thee ruler over many things : " enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

If, therefore, we have any zeal for the glory of God, if any regard for the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom,

Kingdom, if any tender concern for the salvation of our hearers, and if, in the great day of the Lord, we would not be found among them that offend, and work iniquity, and after having prophesied in Christ's name, hear him pronounce against us the dreadful sentence, "Depart from me; I know you not." Let us take heed to ourselves, and to our doctrine, and walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.

IT is now time to hasten to a conclusion. If it is our duty to give no offence, how difficult then is our office! what superior accomplishments, natural and acquired, what exalted improvements in vital piety, what continual aids of the Holy Spirit, are requisite to preserve from giving offence in any thing, men exposed to such a variety of temptations and snares! The best of us have cause, with grief and self-abasement, to acknowledge, that in many things we daily offend. Let us not, however, sink into slothfulness and despair. God's grace will be sufficient for us, if we humbly implore it, and he will perfect strength in our weakness. Say not, O humble servant of Christ, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that God shall send thee; and whatsoever he commandeth thee, thou shalt speak. What he has done for many others, may greatly encourage our prayers and endeavours. We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, what burning and shining lights have gone before us in the work of the Lord. We have heard of their holy exemplary lives; their strict discipline, both in their own families and in the church of God; the gravity,

nay, dignity, of their appearance ; their animated penetrating sermons, and their edifying manner in familiar discourse. May a double portion of their excellent spirit rest upon us who come after them ! And when, from time to time, our fathers are stripped of their priestly robes, may the sons of the prophets who stand up in their room, even exceed them in knowledge of divine things, in piety, in wisdom, in diligence, in success ! that thus our holy religion may descend uncorrupted to distant ages, and the people which shall be created may praise the Lord.

I have been exhorting myself and my Reverend fathers and brethren, not to give offence. It is equally necessary to exhort you, our hearers, not to be hasty in taking it. Be tender, my friends, of our reputation. If any thing is insinuated to our disadvantage, be not rash and easy in believing it. If the charge is not supported by sufficient evidence, regard it not. Against an elder receive not an accusation under two or three witnesses. By wounding our good name, you render our ministry despicable and unsuccessful ; than which nothing can be more pleasing to Satan, or hurtful to your own eternal interests. Judge not our cause, till you have given it a fair impartial hearing. Pass no sentence against us, till you know we have done what is alledged, and till you also know we had no good reason for doing it. And since God instructs you by men of like passions and infirmities with yourselves, expect not from them angelical perfection. Make candid allowances for those errors and frailties that are incident to the wisest and best of men. Throw over them the veil of charity. Do not form a judgment

ment of our general character from one unguarded word or action. God hath threatened, that those shall be cut off that watch for iniquity ; that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate. You expect we should give no offence by the neglect of our duty : we, with the same justice, expect, that you should give no offence by the neglect of yours ; and offence you give us, if you do not attend our ministerial instructions, implore the blessing of God upon them, and actually improve by them. If many professed Christians spent not more time in censuring ministers than in praying for them, the ministry in this land would be less blamed than it is at present, and probably less blameworthy too. Mean time, what is amiss in our conduct, will be no excuse for despising the message we bring in the name of Jesus, and persisting in impenitence and unbelief.

If an inoffensive ministry is thus important, how careful should patrons be to present, and parishes still enjoying the important privilege of election, to call none to the pastoral office, who may be in danger of giving offence by their weak abilities, unsound principles, or dissolute lives ! ----- And how foolish and criminal a part do candidates act, who hastily rush into the sacred function, ere they have laid in the necessary furniture for discharging it honourably ! Is there not cause to fear, that not their character only, but religion in general, may suffer for the reproach of their youth ?

Upon the whole, would we give no offence as Men, as Christians, as Ministers of Christ ? let us search out the sins and infirmities to which we are chiefly liable, that

that we may guard against these with peculiar care. In order to discover our weak side, let us duly regard the opinion others entertain of us. Let us not interpret friendly admonition as a disparagement and affront, but thankfully receive it, as a mark of unfeigned affection. Say, with David, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be as excellent oil which shall not break my head." We are often blind to our own failings; and happy are we, if we can engage some wise and good man, who tenderly regards our welfare, to point them out. But if we find none thus faithful and honest, let us wisely improve the accusations of enemies, and learn from them those blemishes and defects, to which, without the help of such ill-natured monitors, we might have remained strangers.

May we all, whether in public or private stations, be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, shining as lights in the world, maintaining always consciences void of offence towards God and towards man. And may the Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. Let him not leave us nor forsake us, that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his holy commandments for ever.

## A P P E N D I X.

[The preceding sermon having been first preached at an ordination, the charges then delivered to the minister and congregation are here subjoined.]

### Charge to the MINISTER.

**T**Hough giving the usual charge would have better become one or other of our venerable fathers, yet, since the place where I stand requires it, suffer me, Reverend Sir, to be your monitor. Providence has called you to an honourable, but at the same time a difficult office. Gifts are necessary to capacitate you for it ; grace, to animate you to discharge it faithfully. A small measure of gifts, and low attainments in grace, will poorly answer these important purposes. If you would be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use; and prepared unto every good work, covet earnestly the best gifts ; the gift of knowledge, the gift of utterance, the gift of prudence. Lift up your heart to the Father of lights, in humble fervent supplication, that he would plentifully pour out upon you these, and every other good and perfect gift : and as they are not now imparted miraculously, but acquired through the blessing of God on the use of means, join to your prayers, diligent application to study. Meditate on divine things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all. Those of the most extensive knowledge, know only in part, and need to learn the way of God more perfectly. Give attendance to reading. Make a wise choice of the books you read.